Romanticizing Brahms: Early Recordings and the Reconstruction of Brahmsian Identity

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van

de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden

op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. mr. C.J.J.M. Stolker,

volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties

te verdedigen op donderdag 11 december 2014

klokke 11.15 uur

door

Anna Scott
geboren te Port of Spain (T&T)
in 1978

Promotiecommissie

Prof. Frans de Ruiter	1e promotor	
Prof. Dr. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson	2e promotor	King's College London
Dr. Bruce Haynes †		
Dr. Marcel Cobussen		
Prof. Dr. Frans-Willem Korsten		
Sigurd Slåttebrekk		Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo
Prof. Dr. Ronald Woodley		Birmingham Conservatoire Birmingham City University

Dit proefschrift is geschreven als een gedeeltelijke vervulling van de vereisten voor het doctoraatsprogramma docARTES. De overblijvende vereiste bestaat uit een demonstratie van de onderzoeksresultaten in de vorm van een artistieke presentatie.

Het docARTES programma is georganiseerd door het Orpheus Instituut te Gent.

In samenwerking met de Universiteit Leiden, de Hogeschool der Kunsten Den Haag, het Conservatorium van Amsterdam, de Katholieke Universiteit Leuven en het Lemmensinstituut.

Table of Contents

For Bruce Haynes, whose wisdom and mischief inspired and sustained this work from its outset.

Abbreviations

Avins, *BLL*
Avins, Styra. *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Billroth - Brahms
Gottlieb-Billroth, Otto ed. *Billroth und Brahms in Briefwechsel*. Berlin: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1935; reprinted 1991.

Briefwechsel
Brahms, Johannes. *Briefwechsel*, 16 vols. Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1912-22; reprinted Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1974.[1]

> Von Herzogenberg, *Briefwechsel 1 - 2*
> Brahms, Johannes. "Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Heinrich und Elisabet von Herzogenberg." In *Johannes Brahms Briefwechsel*, vol. i/ii, 1st edition, edited by Max Kalbeck. Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1912 - 22.
>
> Heimsoeth/Reinecke/Reinthaler, *Briefwechsel 3*.
> Brahms, Johannes. "Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Karl Reinthaler, Max Bruch, Hermann Deiters, Friedrich Heimsoeth, Karl Reinecke, Ernst Rudorff, Bernhard und Luise Scholz." In *Johannes Brahms Briefwechsel*, vol. iii, 2nd revised edition, edited by Wilhelm Altmann (1912). Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1912 - 22.
>
> Grimm, *Briefwechsel 4*
> Brahms, Johannes. "Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Julius Otto Grimm." In *Johannes Brahms Briefwechsel,* vol. iv, edited by Richard Barth (1912). Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1912 - 22.
>
> Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5 - 6*
> Brahms, Johannes. "Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Joseph Joachim." In *Johannes Brahms Briefwechsel*, vol. v/vi, edited by Andreas Moser (vol. v: 1921; vol. vi: 1912). Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1912 - 22.
>
> Fellinger/Levi, *Briefwechsel 7*.
> Brahms, Johannes. "Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Hermann Levi, Friedrich Gernsheim sowie den Familien Hecht und Fellinger." In *Johannes*

[1] For those volumes in the *Briefwechsel* that contain letters between Brahms and more than one other person, only the person involved in the quoted material is indicated.

Brahms Briefwechsel, vol. vii, edited by Leopold Schmidt (1910). Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1912 - 22.

Widmann, *Briefwechsel* 8.
Brahms, Johannes. "Johannes Brahms an Joseph Victor Widmann, Ellen und Ferdinand Vetter, Adolf Schubring." In *Johannes Brahms Briefwechsel,* vol. viii, edited by Max Kalbeck (1915). Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1912 - 22.

Simrock, *Briefwechsel 11 - 12*
Brahms, Johannes. "Johannes Brahms Briefe an Fritz Simrock." In *Johannes Brahms Briefwechsel*, vols. xi/xii, edited by Max Kalbeck (1919). Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1912 - 22.

Spitta, *Briefwechsel 16*.
Brahms, Johannes. "Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Philipp Spitta, Otto Dessoff." In *Johannes Brahms Briefwechsel,* vol. xvi, edited by Carl Krebs (1920). Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1912 - 22.

Von Heldburg, *Briefwechsel 17*.
Brahms, Johannes. "Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Herzog Georg II. Von Sachsen-Meiningen und Helene Freifrau von Heldburg." In *Johannes Brahms Briefwechsel*, vol. xvii, edited by Herta Müller and Renate Hofmann (1991). Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1912 - 22.

Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe
Litzmann, Berthold ed. *Clara Schumann - Johannes Brahms: Briefe aus den Jahren 1853 - 1896,* 2 vols. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1927.

Clara Schumann: ein Künstlerleben
Berthold Litzmann ed., *Clara Schumann: Ein Künstlerleben nach Tagebuchern und Briefen*, 3 vols. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1920.

Erinnerungen
Schumann, Eugenie. *Erinnerungen*. Stuttgart: J. Engelhorns Nachfolger Adolf Spemann: Stuttgart, 1925; trans. Marie Busch. London: Heinemann, 1927.

Hanslick, *Am Ende*.
Hanslick, Eduard. *Am Ende des Jahrhunderts (1895 - 1899)*, 2nd edition. Berlin: Allgemeiner Verein für deutsche Literatur, 1899.

Joachim Briefe
Joachim, Johannes and Andreas Moser, eds. *Briefe von und an Joseph Joachim*, 3 vols. Berlin: Julius Bard, 1911 - 1912.

Kalbeck, *Brahms 4*
Kalbeck, Max. *Johannes Brahms*, 4th edition, vol. iv. Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1908 - 1921.

NZfM
Neue Zeitschrift für Musik

Orel, *Brahms & Allgeyer*
Orel, Alfred. *Johannes Brahms & Julius Allgeyer: Eine Künstlerfreundschaft in Briefen*. Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1964.

Specht, *Leben und Werk*.
Specht, Richard. *Johannes Brahms: Leben und Werk eines deutschen Meisters.* Hellerau: Avalon Verlag, 1928; trans. Eric Blom. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1930.

Spies, *Ein Gedenkbuch*.
Spies, Minna. *Hermine Spies: Ein Gedenkbuch für ihre Freunde von ihrer Schwester*, 3rd edition. Leipzig: G. J. Göschen'sche Verlag, 1905.

Spitta, *Zur Musik*.
Spitta, Philipp. *Zur Musik*. Berlin: Gebrüder Paetel, 1892.

Stephenson, *Familie.*
Stephenson, Kurt. *Johannes Brahms in seiner Familie*. Hamburg: Dr. Ernst Hauswedell & Co., 1973.

TMTASCC
The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular

Von Balassa, *Brahmsfreundin*.
Balassa, Ottilie von. *Die Brahmsfreundin Ottilie Ebner und ihr Kreis*. Vienna: Komissionsverlag Franz Bondy, 1933.

Von Bülow, *Briefe*.
Bülow, Marie von, ed. *Hans von Bülow: Briefe und Schriften,* 8 vols. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1895-1908.

Introduction

I first encountered Johannes Brahms's solo piano music at the age of sixteen. Having begun serious piano lessons at what I was told was the hopelessly late age of thirteen, here I was just three years later tackling a repertoire that pianists usually encounter later in life: after they had flexed their expressive and technical muscles in the canon's more virtuosic warhorses and quixotic rhapsodies, and most importantly, after they had understood that Brahms's music is meant to exist outside such categories.

My piano teacher however had studied with Adele Marcus, who had in turn been a student of Artur Schnabel: a pianist noted for his seriousness, his deference to the classics, his abstention from display, his intellectualism, and most of all, for his association with Brahms. Of his time as Schnabel's student, Leon Fleischer recalls that his teacher "was revered, but he wasn't popular or glamorous," and that "everyone called him an intellectual...[t]he implication was that he played with his brain."[2] These 'Brahmsian' traits were soon instilled in me, and when once asked by a competition jury to deliver a final deciding encore, I chose to play a selection from the *Well Tempered Clavier* and Brahms's *Intermezzo in E major* Op. 116 no. 4 while my rival delivered a rousing rendition of something fiendishly difficult. After winning, I remember thinking that there might be something to this Brahmsian thing after all.

Over the years, my teacher would often reach for the tattered, yellowing score she had used while studying Brahms's piano works with Marcus; its pages filled to the

[2] Susan Weiss Leon Fleisher, "An Interview with Leon Fleisher," *The Hopkins Review* 1, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 423, 431, accessed January 14, 2013, doi: 10.1353/thr.0.0017.

margins with annotations of her teacher's reminiscences of Schnabel, through whom we all felt a visceral connection to Brahms. In those lessons I learned that 'characteristic' Brahms style is serious, restrained, stoic, portentous and modestly powerful, among other things. It was years later however before I realized that this language had been passed to other pianists who could not boast of some imaginary link to Brahms: somehow we all knew *exactly* what was meant when our performances were described as 'a little too Schumann and not enough Brahms.' The authority with which this language was used and the unwavering compliance its associated performance norms commanded seemed informed by a deep sense of historical legitimacy; whereby literal, detailed, structural, and tonally-, temporally-, expressively- and technically-restrained renderings of Brahms's scores were understood to translate into performances that he himself might recognize, or that would at least preserve something of his original musical intentions. Even pianists whose artistic practices weren't consciously defined by ethical concerns like historical authenticity still invoked the descriptors of proper Brahms style as if they were gospel.

I had always suspected however, that the strictures of modern Brahms style were suppressing some intangible quality in performances of Brahms's piano works in general, and in his enigmatic late piano works Op. 116 - 119 in particular. This hunch seemed to be confirmed when I first heard Brahms's own 1889 cylinder recording and the recordings of those pupils he shared with Clara Schumann. I wondered how mainstream pianists could possibly believe in the historical validity of modern Brahms style, and why modern historically-informed (HIP) and even recordings-inspired performances (RIP) of Brahms's music sound nothing like Brahms as captured on these historical sounding traces. I set out to uncover what lay in the gaps between the loci of knowledge, ethics and

act in performances of Brahms's late piano music: in other words, why don't we do what we know and what we believe?

While scholarly dissections of the life and work of Johannes Brahms could fill libraries many times over, some impenetrable force seems to mediate how historical evidence of his musical contexts is collected, framed, and then translated into musical acts. In the field of Brahms performance studies therefore, perhaps the question isn't what don't we know, but rather how do we *do* this knowledge, and why? The stylistic gaps between Brahms as he was recorded by those who knew him, and modern Brahms style of all ethical denominations from mainstream to HIP and RIP, suggest that there is an unseen process of selection being carried out with regards to what types of historical evidence are deemed authoritative, while some guiding framework is dictating how this evidence should come together to form a meaningful whole.

In period performance spheres that are fully reliant on non-sounding traces of historical style, modern tastes and standards tend to select for what pieces of historical evidence will be incorporated, like eighteenth-century embellishment practices as detailed in treatises for example; while dictating that these elements should come together within the lighter and sparser soundscapes currently viewed as historically authentic. In the absence of real sounds to copy, historical performance ventures seem to be more a function of the present than of the past. In the case of Brahms's music however, when in possession of actual sounding evidence of the composer's own performance contexts, and given their either tacit or explicit investment in notions regarding 'characteristic' Brahms style, why are so few pianists experimenting with, much less copying, the early

recordings of pianists in Brahms's inner circle? There must be a larger force at work here, beyond the hegemony of modern performance tastes and standards.

Kevin Korsyn argues that this mediating force is an aesthetic ideology of unity; whereby scholars are so fixated upon ideas related to Brahms's mastery of form that they ignore any evidence that contradicts their theory, particularly when that evidence reference themes of heterogeneity, ambiguity and complexity.[3] Because Korsyn's critique ignores the performative implications of the aesthetic ideology of unity however, and focuses instead on the notational features of Brahms's music and on external labels like Modernism versus Classicism, a much more pervasive fixation goes unchallenged. As any musician can attest, both coherent *and* complex performances are those in which an artist has demonstrated mastery in the areas of knowledge and execution, or mental and physical control. Like all of the descriptors of characteristic Brahms style therefore, musical coherence and complexity are both predicated upon the control of one's mind and body and can thus be understood as having positive implications for musicians' artistic practices and identities.

It is thus argued throughout this volume that it is in fact an aesthetic ideology of control that mediates all activities in the spheres of Brahms scholarship and performance: one whose language and associated performance norms arose out of the "fashionable anathemas"[4] that characterized nineteenth-century dialectics positing Brahms as the

---

[3] Kevin Korsyn, "Brahms Research and Aesthetic Ideology," review of *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. George S. Bozarth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), *Music Analysis*, 12, no. 1 (March 1993): 101, accessed December 15, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/854077.

[4] Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic*, Studies in Musicology, no. 101 (London: UMI Research Press, 1998), 58, in Richard Taruskin, "Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology," *19th-Century*

conservative Classical antipode to his more overtly Romantic contemporaries in general, and to the 'progressive,' theatrical, virtuosic and coloristic composers of Wagner, Liszt and Berlioz's New German School in particular. Throughout these polemics, Brahms's detractors and supporters alike offered up his mental and physical control as an explanation for his evasion of the poetic inspirations and lovesick afflictions of his Romantic milieu. As a result, the documentary record is resplendent with explicit references to Brahms's restraint, thereby reinforcing modern beliefs in the historical veracity of his Classical canonic identity.

In a grandiose conflation of biography and aesthetic evaluation, these ideas have become irrevocably affixed to Brahms who, like Schnabel, remains representative of a certain *kind* of musical identity: one whose enduring symbolic appeal continues to resist destabilizing discourses, particularly with regards to the modes with which it is translated into musical acts. While the aesthetic ideology of control mediates what kinds of historical evidence of Brahms's musical contexts are deemed authoritative, its associated and seemingly historically-grounded performance norms ensure that they are applied in ways that do not threaten relativist constructions of his controlled canonic identity. All of this leads even the most ethically inclined pianists to shape the detail and structure of Brahms's works in temporally, tonally, expressively and technically controlled ways that likely never occurred to the composer, while still believing in the historical gravitas of their performances. And so the gaps between modern and early-recorded Brahms style persist.

Music, 16, no. 3 (Spring, 1993): 290 - 91, accessed December 19, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/746396.

This impulse to protect Brahms's identity and through it our own however, informs a fundamental absurdity in modern Brahmsian thought: namely, that if inner and outer restraint are the most essential indicators of historically-valid Brahms style, then the composer and his own pupils could be considered to be the most *un*Brahmsian pianists of all. Indeed, their early recordings evidence an approach to performance characterized by the emotional outbursts and physical conundrums more typically associated with their Romantic contemporaries. Perhaps then it is no wonder why Brahms as captured on early recordings continues to be kept at arm's length from the controlled anti-Romantic Brahms of our imaginations.

As a pianist who subscribes to the dual and often conflicting mantras of do no harm (an ethical stance) and do it creatively (an assertion of agency), hearing early-recorded Brahms style for the first time revealed that, like many pianists, I was vastly under-informed about what it might take to play Brahms's late piano music in ways reflective of his musical contexts, while significantly overestimating the creative affordances of contemporary Brahms style. While there's nothing wrong with selectively applying historical evidence of Brahms's performance contexts in ways that do not threaten relativist constructions of his canonic identity, it seemed important to at least see what happens to that identity, along with its underlying aesthetic ideology and associated performance norms, when this evidence is implemented in its entirety.

This thesis opens therefore with an investigation into the origins of the Brahmsian aesthetic ideology of control and the modes by which it continues to mediate both scholarly and performance-based Brahms activities. This is followed by an exploration of what Brahms's late piano pieces Op. 116 - 119 might 'tell of' beyond narratives designed

to reinforce understandings of his controlled canonic identity, and an examination of how such understandings continue to mediate assessments of the performance styles of pianists in his inner circle. This is followed by comprehensive analyses of the early Brahms recordings of two of these pianists, Adelina de Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz; and an account of my efforts to first copy their performances, and then to experiment with their styles in ways that are consciously unstructured by the Brahmsian aesthetic ideology of control. The sounding outcomes of these style copies and experiments are then used to reflect upon the historical validity of prevailing notions concerning Brahms's canonic identity, and are available in this volume's accompanying sound examples.

The hypothesis is that when documentary and sounding traces of Brahms's musical contexts are appraised in their entirety, and with a view to problematizing rather than reinforcing the aesthetic ideology of control, understandings of what it takes to perform Brahms in a historical way may have to be expanded to include the corporeal and psychological excesses, risks, tantrums and rhapsodies typically associated with Romantic pianism. It is also hypothesized that this expansion will afford a retelling of Brahms's identity; that this retelling will open up a palette of expressive and technical resources previously suppressed by the mores of modern Brahms style; that these resources, when applied experimentally, will further elucidate the gaps between modern Brahms style and Brahms as he was recorded; and that the resulting performance style may offer modern pianists a reconciliation of the Scylla and Charybdis of fidelity and creativity in their Brahms performances. With so very much to gain, perhaps the question is not what do we risk by Romanticizing Brahms, but rather what do we stand to lose by continuing to romanticize him?

Evidence for the pervasiveness of the aesthetic ideology of mental and physical control in modern Brahms discourse is everywhere, if one is looking for it. Take reviews of that elite group of pianists understood to be 'Brahmsians': pianists like Claudio Arrau for example, with his "control which comes, not from the fingers, but from the pianist's whole body and spirit, massively poised."[5] Aesopian in tone, such reviews imply that like Brahms, so too should pianists stand fast against weaknesses and excesses of the mind and body: debilities represented by the more expressively overwrought and technically ostentatious practices of his contemporaries. We believe in the historical validity of this narrative as Brahms's sympathisers and critics alike have bequeathed to us a historical documentary record in which his anachronistically controlled mental and physical apparatus is explicitly posited as the root of his evasion of both the zeniths and abysses of Romanticism: a context in which artistic genius was conflated with the trope of health, if you were a Classicist; or that of disease, if you were a Romantic. As a result of verbal accounts in which it is observed that Brahms "knocks into the proverbial cocked hat the idea that genius inhabits an unsound brain and crazy body,"[6] Brahms's healthy and controlled Classical identity seems laden with historical veracity.

Counter to such narratives however are traces of Brahms's and Robert Schumann's Kreislerian affinities. Letters reveal that the young Brahms often referred to himself as 'Joh. Kreisler Junior' and was captivated by the quintessentially Romantic themes of inner and outer torment that so permeate E. T. A. Hoffmann's writings. These early predilections and Robert Schumann's tragic mind-body disintegration link Brahms with

---

[5] Edward Greenfield, "Brahms Piano Works," review of *Claudio Arrau; Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bernard Haitink,* Philips (1) 6768 356 (5 LPs), 1983, in *Gramophone* (July 1983): 140.

[6] J. F. Rogers, "The Health of Musicians," *The Musical Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (October 1926): 619 - 20, accessed December 14, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/738343.

characters like Joseph Joachim and Clara Schumann, and letters between the three lifelong friends further suggest that Brahms's late piano works reference extra-musical content beyond that which is currently emphasized in scholarly circles. Indeed, narratives concerning Brahms's feelings of alienation, solitude, authorial belatedness and resigned sadness later in life will be shown to be pre-structured by the aesthetic ideology of control as they buttress understandings of his lifelong inner and outer restraint; leading to portentous and serious performances of his late piano works.

Brahms's letters however, reveal him to have been both tormented and comforted by memories of his troubled childhood home in Hamburg, as well as by memories of twilight hours spent at Clara's Düsseldorf home in the years before and just after Robert's death. Around the time Brahms describes his late piano pieces as 'the lullabies of my sorrows' there is evidence to suggest that these reminiscences of domestic turmoil and bliss were very much on his mind; hinting at a kind of shifting, restless and unfolding nostalgia as opposed to the more static emotional content of sadness or resignation. Brahms's late letters also evidence his overindulgence in food, wine and tobacco; his love of games and jokes; his propensity for irritability, callousness and jealousy; his mindfulness of the mental and physical deteriorations of those closest to him; as well as his own ultimately fatal disease. It will be argued that while this extra-musical content is to a certain extent 'written in' to the fabric of Brahms's late piano works, it may only be accessible by expanding the precepts of modern Brahms style to include expressive and technical resources that do not sound and signify as controlled today. Indeed, recordings of Brahms's late piano works by those who knew him are not static and resigned, but are rather decidedly dynamic, restless, carefree and unreservedly impassioned.

The aesthetic ideology of control will also be shown to lurk behind palatable modern notions of a unified Schumann-Brahms school of pianism: one centred upon nineteenth-century descriptions of Clara Schumann's hyper-controlled performance ideology. Because verbal accounts of Clara's pianism are full of the language of mental and physical control as related to matters of expressive and technical restraint, and given Clara's and Brahms's lifelong private and professional association, it will be argued that the precepts of Clara's described approach are used today to appraise the Brahmsian historical authority of the described and recorded performance styles of many of the Schumann-Brahms circle pianists, Brahms included.

While Clara certainly did extoll the virtues of control, the recorded performance styles of even some of her most dedicated students will be shown to signify as anything but today. Adelina De Lara's early-recorded Brahms style for example, is only deemed historically authoritative relative to that of other pianists in the Schumann-Brahms circle; with those elements of her approach that are seemingly reflective of Clara's restraint being held up as essential stylistic content, while the less controlled qualities of her style are dismissed as evidence of her advanced age at the time of recording. Brahms, Ilona Eibenschütz, and a few other pianists whose recordings posit them as furthest from the Clara 'ideal' on the other hand, will be shown to have espoused an even more expressively and technically carefree approach. Coupled with reports of Clara's displeasure at her pianism, Eibenschütz's wild Brahms recordings are said to lack historical authority, while awkward conclusions regarding the 'uncharacteristic' Brahms playing heard on the composer's own recording are avoided in modern scholarly circles

through emphases of his transition from a young virtuoso who performed other composers' works to an aged composer whose works were performed by others.

While Clara indeed stressed the importance of playing musical detail and structure in highly literal and temporally, tonally, expressively and technically controlled ways, values that continue to inform the precepts of modern Brahms style, the early recordings of even the most restrained members of her circle evidence the use of expressive and technical resources such as the altering of, adding to and subtracting from notated musical details; the use of arpeggiation, dislocation, rhythmic alteration and tempo modification; and the blurring of structure and rhythmic regularity. The early-recorded performance styles of those on the opposite end of the spectrum of approaches represented by the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists on the other hand, include all of these qualities but to a significantly more extreme degree.

While this language is informed by the aesthetic ideology of control and can sound rather disparaging, we will see that the performance styles it describes are characterized by qualities rarely heard in interpretations of Brahms's late piano works today: qualities suggestive of much less controlled internal and external states, like those of abandon, turmoil, passion, restlessness, fantasy and fury. Indeed, in verbal accounts often passed over in favour of those that seem to align his pianism with Clara's, Brahms is described as having played as if he was half drunk: with carefree gusto and abandon, with many missed and wrong notes, and as if he were performing improvised 'sketches' of his piano works. While these qualities are typically framed as symptomatic of his later deteriorated style, I will argue that they were part of the essential content of his lifelong approach to the piano; that this approach had always differed from Clara's; and as such,

that we may learn more about how Brahms actually played from those pianists in the Schumann-Brahms circle that are understood as having been furthest from the Clara 'ideal,' and thus whose Brahmsian historical authority is currently viewed as tenuous.

While modern pianists are often curious to see what happens to Brahms's piano music when applying the late-Romantic expressive and technical devices evidenced by the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists' recordings, few are willing to imitate the extremity and frequency with which these resources were actually used. Instead, they prefer to incorporate only those elements of early-recorded Brahms style that are verifiable by descriptions and treatises, or that are reducible to modern preferences for the careful elucidation of notated detail and structure; while continuing to play in the tonally, temporally, expressively and technically restrained manner dictated by modern Brahms performance norms. As a result, the aesthetic ideology of control and the canonic identity it protects remain uncompromisingly upright, while the qualities heard to such great advantage on the early recordings of the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists remain elusive.

When elements of early-recorded Brahms style are applied without worrying about what their outcomes might say about the historical accuracy of Brahms's controlled Classical identity however, it will be argued that sounds and meanings emerge that reference the unstable bodily and emotional states typically associated with Romantic pianism. These performances are as far from the precepts of modern Brahms style as they are reflective of the enigmatic spirit of their early-recorded models, thereby bridging the gaps between our ethical and creative beliefs, our musical acts, and documentary and recorded evidence of Brahms's musical context in its entirety. Most tellingly perhaps, and

much like their early-recorded models, these performances do not tell us reassuringly familiar stories about Brahmsian identity, but rather surprising and possibility-laden ones in which that identity and its associated performance norms are renegotiated and retold in real-time; revealing them to be highly malleable, context-specific, and perhaps even disposable.

The core question addressed by this thesis is thus: What happens to understandings of Brahms's identity when documentary and early-recorded evidence of his performance contexts is assembled and translated at the piano with a view to problematizing rather than reaffirming the aesthetic ideology of control? This question will be addressed in three stages. The first phase involves an excavation of the origins and vestiges of the aesthetic ideology of control. Of particular interest here will be how this ideology continues to mediate scholarly assessments and performative translations of both documentary and sounding evidence of Brahms's musical contexts. The second phase involves style-copying 'tests,' in which Adelina De Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz's Brahms recordings will be imitated based on the results of both 'naked ear' (close listening) and software-assisted analyses. The third and final phase involves an experimental extrapolation of the results of these style-copying tests across three works that were left unrecorded by the Schumann-Brahms pianists. The results of these tests and experiments will then be used to reflect upon modern notions of Brahmsian identity, and are available in accompanying sound examples and annotated scores.

As a brief note on the distinction between 'test' and 'experiment' here, the style-copying tests are named as such because while they do involve problem-solving (how is a chord being arpeggiated), decision-making (should I place beats at the bottom or at the

top of a rolled chord) and heaps of imagination (how would I have to position my hands on the keys in order to replicate a given sound), their methodology is less experimental and more akin to assembling a jigsaw puzzle in that their end results are known in advance. In other words, my style-copies aim only to be copies. While this process is as frustrating as it is revelatory, as William Brooks puts it, "as with any 'historically informed' performance, th[is] combination of scholarship, intuition, and judgment produce[s] unexpected variations and curious difficulties; but no new terrain [is] traversed, though the ground [is] somewhat cleared."[7]

In the experimental phase however, the stylistic dialects that were analysed and inhabited in the style-copying phase are then extrapolated across works for which I have no original sounding model. Newly learned ways of thinking, listening and doing are simply introduced into Brahms's late piano works *in situ*, and without any pre-structuring concern for what their outcomes might say about Brahms's identity. The only guiding criteria in this phase is that elements of De Lara and Eibenschütz's performance styles will be freely inserted and allowed to flourish in Brahms's music; unravelling sound, score and identity to ends inspired by documentary and sounding evidence of Brahms's musical context in its entirety. Necessarily open-ended, flexible and designed to generate more questions than answers, this process *is* experimental as it consciously seeks to problematize the very forces that would have it remain a fixed and closed process: forces like the aesthetic ideology of control.

As a practical note, perhaps it would be helpful to define terms that will be used throughout this discussion. Arpeggiation refers to the practice of rolling notes that are

[7] William Brooks, "Historical Precedents for Artistic Research in Music: The Case of William Butler Yeats," in *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology*, edited by Darla Crispin and Bob Gilmore (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014), 193.

notated vertically. The order in which the notes of these chords are rolled can vary but is often related to voice leading, while the speeds at which they are rolled depend on whether one is looking to ground or propel temporal motion. Where left-hand octaves are rolled quickly from bottom to top, with associated right-hand materials sounding with rather than before or after the upper left-hand note, this too will be called arpeggiation.

Dislocation on the other hand thus refers to the playing of notes before or after their associated materials. This will include the practice of playing left- or right-hand material earlier or later than its notated counterparts; the early or late playing of inner notes; and the very slow and wide rolling of left-hand octaves, even when their upper note is played simultaneously with associated right-hand materials. When both notes of rolled left-hand octaves sound before or after their associated right-hand materials, this will naturally also be called dislocation. Rhythmic alteration is used here to describe the lengthening or shortening of notes and rests at the level of the beat; while tempo modification involves rushing or slowing over two or more beats. Truncation will be used to refer to the omission or reduction of materials, while elision refers to the linking of discretely notated materials, typically through arpeggiation.

As a final note, those with an interest in historical performance will notice that I have quite consciously avoided a discussion of period pianos here. While this omission is in no way an assertion that Brahms as played on historical keyboards has nothing to teach us about how this repertoire may have sounded at the time of its conception, I do however wish to tease the notion of style away from that of tool, at least within the context of the present research question. The recordings at the centre of this undertaking are resplendent with expressive and technical resources long thought to be evidentiary of

past pianists' negotiation of the affordances and limitations of pre-modern keyboards. Many of the pianists surveyed here however, continued to use these devices on live and studio recordings well into the mid-twentieth century, and on what was certainly a variety of instruments. While it could be argued that this is how they learned to play and that they retained this style long after the tools at their disposal had changed, this would be to argue that past pianists weren't as responsive to their instruments as modern pianists. This seems like a silly argument to make, especially when asserting that they used these devices in the first place in response to the instruments at hand.

Furthermore, while it is true that Brahms kept Robert Schumann's Graf fortepiano, he did so in remembrance of his old friend but otherwise seems to have thought the instrument was unsuitable for performance. In 1868 he called it a "precious but bulky souvenir,"[8] and in 1873 he sent it to Vienna's International Exposition to be displayed alongside Mozart's and Beethoven's pianos. While some period pianists perform Brahms on the mightier 1890s-era Steinway and Bechstein pianos he is known to have favoured, while often including many of the late-Romantic expressive devices discussed thus far, their performances are otherwise just as controlled as those of pianists performing on modern instruments. Indeed, our access to all kinds of historical tools still has not produced Brahms performances that capture the beguiling spirit captured on the recordings of those pianists who knew him, despite pianists' continued belief in both their historical awareness and creative agency. This thesis simply intends to find out why.

[8] Styra Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 364.

1) Brahmsian Minds and Bodies: The Aesthetic Ideology of Control.

> I call the classic healthy, and the romantic sick. The works of today are romantic not because they are new, but because they are weak, sickly or sick. The old works are classical not because they are old, but because they are energetic, hale and hearty.[9]

1.1) Introduction

Despite being tasked with the mastery of a vast repertoire spanning over three hundred years, modern pianists have an uncanny ability to precisely describe the qualities of what they consider to be 'characteristic' Brahms style at the piano. The language of contemporary Brahms style is both highly relative, with desirable approaches to the performance of Johannes Brahms's piano music being distinguished from approaches to that of Frédéric Chopin, Robert Schumann, or Franz Liszt, for example; as well as widely understood, with pianists from opposite ends of the globe able to grasp exactly what is meant when a performance is described as 'Brahmsian.'

In my first encounters with Brahms's late piano music I too was inculcated into the language of characteristic, proper, or 'good' Brahms style: language that is accompanied by a strict set of performance norms as well. When a colleague, reviewer or collaborator comments that my playing of chords in Brahms's piano music is not stylistically correct, I somehow know that what is meant is that these chords are flashy,

[9] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, quoted in Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Selected Essays*, trans. and ed. Francis Steegmuller and Norbert Guterman (London: Lowe & Brydone Ltd., 1965), 5.

extroverted and harsh as opposed to full, resonant, round and warm; implying that some adjustment is needed both in my approach to tone production and in the speed of my attack and release.

The language of Brahms style also implies ways of being as much as it does concrete ways of understanding and doing. Just like Artur Schnabel, through whom my own Brahmsian 'lineage' derives, those pianists specially equipped to handle this repertoire are those noted for their serious and intellectual temperaments, and for their abstention from overt technical display, pretence and cheap sentimentality. While Brahms himself is popularly understood to have disproved of the practices of his more overtly Romantic contemporaries, so too is Schnabel reported to have shunned the glittering Romantic virtuosic warhorses of the repertoire like Liszt's *Transcendental Études, Fantasies and Rhapsodies* in favour of the piano works of Bach and Beethoven. The implication here is that like Brahms, Schnabel is a certain 'type' of musician.

The language of contemporary Brahms style is thus descriptive, prescriptive and subjective, with profound implications for the practices and identities of performers and composer alike. The authority with which this language is wielded and the compliance its associated performance norms command seem predicated upon assumptions of historical validity, and thus upon often unacknowledged or tacit ethical obligations; the implication being that 'characteristic' Brahms performances are those that capture, preserve and communicate some original truth content and intention. Even those performers who do not consciously espouse ethical beliefs in their approaches to Brahms's piano music still view the precepts of contemporary Brahms style as true, proper and correct. Despite the fact that it is how these qualities are borne out in performances today that seem to

distinguish mainstream, historically-informed and even recordings-inspired Brahms from Brahms as he was recorded by those who knew him, few pianists ever question the historical validity of modern understandings of Brahmsian identity.

Indeed, the language of contemporary Brahms style and its associated performance norms are found throughout the historical documentary record, having arisen out of the "fashionable anathemas"[10] that characterized well-documented nineteenth-century dialectics positing Brahms as the classicist antipode to the more 'progressive,' theatrical, virtuosic and coloristic composers of Wagner, Liszt and Berlioz's New German School. Throughout such accounts one finds references to Brahms's hyper-controlled anti-Romantic identity: both from supporters looking to reaffirm his Classicist lineage thereby distancing him from the degenerate practices of his contemporaries; and from detractors looking to label him as staid, old-fashioned and unimaginative in a climate that linked genius with insanity and illness: debilities amply represented by members of the New Germans and by the total mind-body disintegration of Brahms's mentor Robert Schumann. Buttressed by the dialectical writings of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century observers, Brahms's canonic identity and its underlying assumptions of psychological and physical fitness continue to stand as proof that a hale and hearty mind and body can avoid the ills of unchecked Romanticism.

In a grandiose conflation of biography and aesthetic evaluation, this relativist language became irrevocably affixed to Brahms who, like Schnabel, remains representative of a certain *kind* of musicianship: one whose enduring symbolic appeal continues to resist potentially destabilizing discourses, especially with regards to the modes by which it is translated into musical acts. While conformity to contemporary

[10] Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music,* 58, in Taruskin, "Back to Whom," 290 - 91.

Brahms performance norms is seen as both historically and ethically sound, this compliance is thus also rooted in the palatability of the identity these norms protect: that of Brahms himself. In other words, by preserving and communicating the essential qualities of Brahms's canonic identity in performances of his music, so too are pianists revealing themselves to be controlled musicians.

As such, if you ask any pianist to describe a typically 'Brahmsian' performer, style or even composition, what you will hear are descriptors that invariably denote ordered, disciplined, and ultimately controlled psychological and corporeal states. Under the rubric of the mind, take for example words like stoic, clear, objective, absolute, logical, complex, coherent, unified, rational, introverted, conservative, scholarly, and high brow; while those Brahmsian descriptors with bodily implications include organic, restrained, refined, pure, ascetic, chaste, modest, robust, manly, German, noble, powerful and healthy. Even the language of what Brahms style is *not* is grounded in the language of mental and physical abandon, with words like sentimental, sensual, effeminate, irrational, noisy, flashy, affected, extroverted, superficial, vague, exotic and virtuosic.

It is my contention that the gaps observed between performances borne from the language of contemporary Brahms style and its associated performance norms and Brahms as he was recorded are occupied by understandings of Brahms's relativist canonic identity, and particularly by a pervasive aesthetic ideology of psychological and physical control: one that leads pianists to shape their Brahms performances in ways that might never have occurred to the composer. Kevin Korsyn is only partly when he asserts that it is an ideology of unity that runs through the collected papers of the *1983 International Brahms Conference,* to the point where the notion becomes "a Procrustean bed": an "*idée*

fixe [that] forces [one] to ignore any evidence that might contradict his theory."[11] Though Korsyn astutely argues against the suppression of themes such as heterogeneity and ambiguity in Brahms discourse, his critique only focuses on notational categories and external labels such as modernism versus classicism. By ignoring the performative implications of the aesthetic ideology of unity, the much deeper fixation of mind-body control goes unchallenged. As any musician can attest, coherently unified or ambiguously heterogeneous performances or works are those in which an artist has demonstrated some preternatural excellence in the areas of knowledge and execution, or mental and physical control. As such, like all of the descriptors of contemporary Brahms style, unity *and* heterogeneity have deep corporeal or psychological implications for the identities and practices of performers and composer alike.

In this chapter I will examine the dialectical origins of modern understandings of Brahms's canonic identity; how that identity has informed the language of contemporary Brahms style; how this language has given rise to an underlying aesthetic ideology of corporeal and psychological control that continues to be reinforced by concrete norms for the performance of Brahms's piano music; and why we continue to feel compelled to purge Schumann's lovesick poison from Brahms's 'body' of work. The hope is that by confronting the agenda-laden, polemical and historically-situated language of Brahmsian identity, that historically-curious pianists may begin to problematize the relationship between what we think about Brahms and how we wish to hear his music performed.

[11] Korsyn, "Brahms Research," 101.

1.2) Brahmsian Minds

At the core of the aesthetic ideology of psychological control lie pervasive ideas concerning Brahms's preternaturally refined intellect. Like Leon Botstein's assessment of Rudolf Weyr's Viennese sculpture of the composer, through the polemical writings of late-Romantic observers Brahms came to symbolize "the mid-century *Ringstrasse* and its celebration of the values of *Bildung*, culture, refinement, and the historical," while Wagner, Liszt and Berlioz's New German School represented the lowbrow attractions of sensuality, colour and virtuosity. A staunch supporter of social, cultural and political progress (views ironically deemed 'modern' and 'foreign' by the Wagnerians),[12] Brahms's achievements "were seen as analogous to those of the leading scientists and scholars who were his friends...[while] the music of Wagner, with its theatrical conception, [and] symbolic meanings...belonged in a much more populist world of historical romanticism."[13]

The relativist language that continues to mediate how Brahms's cerebral musicality is communicated in performances of his works originates in the dialectical writings of his most ardent supporters and critics. For example, when distancing Brahms from his more overtly Romantic contemporaries who favoured colour over formal rigor, Sigismond Stojowski praises Brahms's "unswervingly logical construction"[14]; while Hermann Deiters asserts that, "We should be glad and thankful that we in Germany possess one artist of the genius and inventive power, of profound education, full of

---

[12] Leon Botstein, "Brahms and Nineteenth-Century Painting," *19th-Century Music* 14, no.2 (Autumn, 1990): 155, 158, accessed June 20, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/746200.
[13] Michael Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 233.
[14] Sigismond Stojowski, "Recollections of Brahms," *The Musical Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (April, 1933): 146, accessed July 19, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/738794.

enthusiasm for the true aims of art, and who...despises everything petty and false...Such men as Brahms are the salt of our art, and keep it from utter degeneracy."[15] For his part, Richard Binns characterizes Brahms as 'one of the biggest minds of his day,' drawing comparisons with the composer and literary critic Arthur Symons's description of Thomas Hardy:

> You see the brain working with an almost painful simplicity - just saved from being painful by a humorous sense of external things which becomes also a kind of intellectual criticism…There is something brooding, obscure, tremulous, as he meditates over man, nature and destiny.[16]

The language of Brahmsian brainpower also appears in markedly less admiring late-Romantic accounts: often by those who felt that Brahms's compositions were mere academic exercises whose reception was buoyed by the enthusiastic (albeit misplaced) support of his most vocal supporters. After the 1890 premiere of Brahms's *String Quartet* Op. 111, Theodor Helm writes: "[The Quartet] bears the cool reflecting trait shared by Brahms, even if his faction conducted itself in the most enthusiastic manner. But enthusiasm is the very feeling that Brahms never arouses…[it is] more thought rather than felt, more constructed than discovered."[17] Others lashed out against what they perceived as "a certain Pharisaism...fashionable especially among University men, which affects the exaltation of [Brahms] to the disparagement of all other modern writers...due

---

[15] Hermann Deiters, "Johannes Brahms: A Biographical Sketch," *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 29, no. 539 (January 1888): 11, accessed December 14, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3359841.
[16] Richard Binns, "Brahms: Some Thoughts towards a Re-Valuation," *The Musical Times* 65, no. 977 (July 1, 1924): 601, accessed December 14, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/911692.
[17] Theodor Helm, *Deutsche Zeitung* 6530 (Morgen Ausgabe, 4 March, 1890): 2, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 236.

to a desire to pose as musically more intellectual than ordinary mortals."[18] Of course there was merit to such grievances, as evidenced by E. Howard-Jones's assertion that:

> [Brahms's] method is terse and epigrammatic, and his utterance makes a demand on both the reasoning as well as the mere listening faculty...[Unless] our attention is emotionally and mentally concentrated we shall not follow his drift; and as we miss that, we may incline flippantly to pronounce the thing uttered as dull or tedious.[19]

While many felt that it was worth "look[ing] for [Brahms's] originality and definite artistic personality beneath a surface that is sometimes difficult of comprehension and even occasionally repellent," others conceded that at his worst he could be "a commonplace and mechanical music-spinner, who could write an elaborate work without once exhibiting so much as a momentary flicker of divine fire."[20] The dialectical fieriness of these debates was such that Brahms's most devoted followers even implored audiences and critics to take his side as an act of solidarity - even in the absence of true comprehension. As Hermann Deiters proclaims, "It is now no longer possible to pass over [Brahms's] works as strange and unintelligible, on the contrary, all true lovers of art must feel constrained to range themselves on his side."[21]

Regardless of the particular partisanship of such late-Romantic accounts, the language of Brahms's intellectualism remains embedded in the aesthetic categories by which we judge interpretations of his music today. Like the unglamorous Schnabel who

---

[18] Harding, "Some Thoughts upon the Position of Johannes Brahms Among the Great Masters of music," *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 33rd session (1906 - 1907): 165, accessed December 3, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/765640.
[19] E. Howard-Jones, "Brahms in his Pianoforte Music," *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 37th Session (1910 - 1911): 118, accessed 03/12/2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/765704.
[20] Ibid., 118; D. C. Parker, "Music and the Grand Style," *The Musical Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (April 1922): 178 - 9, accessed 15/12/2012, http://www.jstor.orh/stable/738228.
[21] Deiters, "Johannes Brahms," 10.

'played with his brain,' good Brahmsian pianists are those who eschew the 'petty and false' degeneracy of crowd-pleasing tricks and overt emotional affectation, and whose performances are 'more thought than felt': a risky venture in an industry of superstar prodigies and standardized performance expectations. After Glenn Gould's infamous 1962 performance of Brahms's *Piano Concerto in D Minor* Op.15 Leonard Bernstein conceded that he "admired [Gould's] intellectual approach, his 'guts' approach, his complete dedication to whatever he was doing."[22] Indeed, the aspirational allure of such unapologetically brainy musicianship leads some Brahmsian pianists to identify with that coterie of highly-educated connoisseurs who proudly 'ranged themselves' on Brahms's side, impervious to accusations of cultish academicism.

> Heralded as an **intellectual** musician, his approach to the instrument is decidedly **academic** and **straightforward**...What the **scholarly** approach to his instrument does bring is a masterful technique, brilliant and crystal-clear voicing, and a complete lack of pretentiousness or over-romanticizing.[23]

> Time and again Brahms's potential for strenuousness and opacity is **clarified** with a superfine musical **intelligence** and technique...you may well wonder when you last heard a pianist with a more **patrician** disregard for all forms of bloated excess or exaggeration.[24]

---

[22] Schuyler Chapin, liner notes to the original SONY release of *Glenn Gould with The New York Philharmonic Orchestra and Leonard Bernstein*, recorded April 6, 1962, Sony Classical SK60675 ADD, reproduced in "Bernstein and Gould Play Brahms," http://wssmlsy.wordpress.com/2010/10/30/bernstein-and-gould-play-brahms/.

[23] Mike D. Brownell, review of *Brahms Piano Concertos 1 & 2*, John Lill (piano), ASV/Resonance 204 (CD), 2006, accessed January 22, 2013, http://www.allmusic.com/album/brahms-piano-concertos-1-2-mw0001388024.

[24] Bryce Morrison, "Brahms - Handel Variations," review of *Brahms - Handel Variations*, Murray Perahia (piano), Sony Classical 88697727252 (CD), 2010, in *Gramophone* (November 29, 2010), accessed January 24, 2013, http://www.gramophone.co.uk/chart/review/brahms-handel-variations.

> Kozhukin evoked both intimacy and majesty, driving the *Andante* with fantastic phrasing, **intelligence** and purity, and infusing the finale with a touch of Beethoven. This repertoire was clearly made for him.[25]

> This is not to say that Mr. Serkin's musical **intelligence** was not also fully engaged.... In the finale, which rippled with contrapuntal clarity and headlong energy, Brahms's debt to Bach was never more palpable. But the Brahms who anticipated Schoenberg also loomed at every turn.[26]

As evidenced by the reviews above, the ideology of Brahmsian psychological fitness is also sustained by ideas related both to the composer's historicism, or the influence of earlier models on his compositional procedures; and his historicity, or his identity as either a backward-looking classicist or a forward-looking modernist and even postmodernist. The language of Brahms's historicism and historicity has palpable consequences for modern Brahmsian performance practices because, like the above-cited review of a performance in which one can hear both Brahms's musical past and future, it posits the composer's profound historical awareness as a respite from the practices of his more overtly Romantic present.

If contemporaneous observers seemed eager to debate Brahms's 'classic' lineage they are not entirely to blame: Brahms once remarked upon studying a Mozart quintet, "That's how it's done from Bach up to myself!"; while Eduard Hanslick observed that the "strongly ethical character of Beethoven's music, which is serious even in merriment...is

---

[25] "Recital at Montreux Chateau de Chillon: Haydn, Brahms, Liszt," review of Denis Kozhukhin (piano), September 11, 2011, accessed January 22, 2013, http://deniskozhukhin.com/2011/09/11/recital-at-montreux-chateau-de-chillon-haydn-brahms-liszt/.

[26] Anthony Tommasini, "Brahms With Fire As Well as I.Q.," review of Peter Serkin (piano), in *New York Times Music Review* (March 1, 2003), accessed February 2, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/01/arts/music-review-brahms-with-fire-as-well-as-iq.html.

also decidedly evident in Brahms."[27] Ultimately however, it was Robert Schumann's 1853 "Neue Bahnen" manifesto that framed the potentiality of Brahms's burgeoning canonic identity in the image of his own "tripartite music-historical credo": one "rooted in an intense involvement with the music of the past, bolstered by the expectation of a poetic future, and shaped by a critical awareness of the present."[28]

If the future was indeed to be a higher echo of the past,[29] then Schumann believed that it should be forged by those who shared his historicist outlook, as opposed to those who made claims of progressivity by cutting ties with classical formal procedures. By launching Brahms into the German musical consciousness as a conservative symbol of some nobler dedication to the past as a critique of one's present, Schumann effectively anointed Brahms as "the first and greatest of that terrible species of our age, the artist 'out of joint with his times.'"[30] As Arthur Lourie observes in 1933:

> At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries...the domination of the German musical culture... was based on German classicism. Its spiritual power was created by the Titans of music – Mozart, Bach, and Beethoven. Brahms was, of course, the gifted interpreter of the spiritual meaning and creative significance of the achievements of these three men...The individual poetry of Brahms's

---

[27] Alexander von Zemlinsky and Karl Weigl, "Brahms and the Newer Generation: Personal Reminiscences," trans. Walter Frisch, *Brahms and his World* (Princeton, 1990), 206, in Roger Moseley, "Is there only Juan Brahms?" *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 131, no. 1 (2006): 163, accessed May 31, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3840474; Eduard Hanslick, *Concerte, Komponisten, Virtuosen, 1870 - 1885* (Berlin, 1886), 165 - 69, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 225 - 26.

[28] Nicole Grimes, "In Search of Absolute Inwardness and Spiritual Subjectivity? The Historical and Ideological Context of Schumann's 'Neue Bahnen,'" *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 39, no. 2 (December 2008): 143 - 44, accessed December 15, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25487551.

[29] *Robert Schumann, Tagebücher*, ed. Georg Eismann (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1971), vol. 1, 304, in Grimes, "In Search," 143 - 44.

[30] Joseph Kerman, "Counsel for the Defense," *The Hudson Review* 3 (1950): 442 - 43, in Korsyn, "Brahms Research," 89.

> music, for all its charm, is of a second-rate order. His chief strength lies in the fact that, assisted by the apparatus for musical thinking devised by him – the most perfect and subtle of his day – he...built the bridge whereby a connection is established between German classicism and the method of composition now universally employed. Brahms's method is in no respect contemporary, but his value...[is] of a methodological rather than of any other order.[31]

I've included this rather lengthy excerpt because it is a brilliant illustration of how rhetoric related to Brahms's connection to the spirit and procedures of German classicism gave rise to language that continues to characterize him "as historical rather than futuristic, traditional rather than ground breaking, and ultimately classical rather than *echt romantisch*."[32] More importantly perhaps, Lourie posits Brahms's "most perfect and subtle" musical mind as the driving force behind his anachronistic and [a]historical canonic identity: as "a conservative engaged in a rear-guard action against the forward march of music."[33] As Hermann Deiters writes in 1888: "At a time when men who ought to know better are trying to destroy form without being able to put anything in its place, [Brahms] stands fast by the good old way – the way of masters who were giants, the way worn by the feet of generations."[34] Clearly, Brahms *knew* better.

This theme of cerebral ahistoricity also appears throughout the historical documentary record in connection to the idea of Brahms as symbolic of a kind of 'full stop' in Western musical histories: from H. A. Harding's 1906 assertion that "Brahms...was avowedly a gatherer-up of what was before him," to Guido Adler's 1933

---

[31] Arthur Lourie, "The Crisis of Form," trans. S. W. Pring, *Music & Letters* 14, no. 2 (April 1933): 96, accessed December 14, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/728908.
[32] Daniel Beller-McKenna, *Brahms and the German Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), in Moseley, "Is There only Juan Brahms?" 162.
[33] J. Peter Burkholder, "Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music," *19th-Century Music* 8, no. 1 (Summer, 1984): 75, accessed August 8, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/746255.
[34] Deiters, "Johannes Brahms," 10.

observation in that, "[Brahms's] work was more a summing-up than a beginning, most of all, perhaps, a reconciliation."[35] Indeed, in the preface to his 1912 analysis of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony,* Heinrich Schenker inscribes: 'To the memory of the last master of German composition, Johannes Brahms.' Moseley asserts that Schenker's dedication both underlines Brahms's Beethovenian lineage, while gloomily echoing a belief shared by many early-twentieth-century observers that Brahms "represents an elite musical culture that has slid irrevocably into the past."[36] While Schenker could not have predicted recent developments in both art and popular music spheres, his "attempt to seal the canon, [as a] protest at what [he] considered the degeneracy of modern music"[37] is a sentiment that continues to resonate in both scholarly and practice-based Brahms spheres today.

Perhaps this nostalgia for the kind of musicianship Brahms represents explains recent attempts to recast him as a modernist and even postmodernist. In "Brahms the Progressive," Arnold Schoenberg emphasizes the more anticipatory aspects of Brahms's compositional style, from his techniques of developing variation and motivic concision, to his unconventional harmonic and rhythmic innovations.[38] Conversely, discussions of Brahms's postmodernism tend to emphasize his (and our own) backwards gaze. As J. Peter Burkholder observes, the 'music of the future' ultimately belonged to Brahms for his use of past models to solve new problems and his anxiety related to composing music for

---

[35] Harding, "Some Thoughts," 160; Guido Adler and W. Oliver Strunk, "Johannes Brahms: His Achievement, His Personality, and His Position," *The Musical Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (April 1933): 140, accessed June 22, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/738793.

[36] Moseley, "Is There Only Juan Brahms," 160 - 1. For Schenker's analysis and dedication, see *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: A Portrayal of its Musical Content, with Running Commentary on Performance and Literature*, ed. and trans. John Rothgeb (New Haven and London, 1992), v.

[37] Roger Moseley, "Reforming Johannes: Brahms, Kreisler Junior and the Piano Trio in B, Op. 8," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 132, part 2 (2007): 279, accessed June 20, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30161409.

[38] Arnold Schoenberg, "Brahms the Progressive," in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein (New York, 1975).

audiences familiar with the music of the past.[39] Similarly, Michael Musgrave describes Brahms as a "nascent postmodernist"[40] for his anticipation of our current preoccupation with the study and understanding of past music.

Kevin Korsyn points out that recent re-brandings of Brahms's canonic identity are symptomatic of a re-evaluation of Romanticism, whereby scholars have realized that the boundaries between Romanticist and Modernist musical languages are more porous than previously thought. Korsyn argues for heterogeneity in his assertion that Brahms recruited a plurality of historically-rooted musical languages by becoming "both the historian and the agent of his own language," and by "having to choose an orientation among languages."[41] Like Schoenberg, Burkholder and Musgrave however, Korsyn's arguments focus on notational categories and external historical labels, while being predicated upon the understanding that Brahms was better mentally equipped to handle the challenges of occupying a historical crossroads than his contemporaries. More importantly, each author avoids implicating Brahms in the performative reality of his actual historical context: one that was considerably more *echt romantisch* than many of us are prepared to accept.

In performances of Brahms's music today, pianists exercise extreme restraint in their use of overt Romantic historical markers such as unnotated *rubato*, preferring instead to adopt a highly literal and performer-neutral approach that is closer in sound and spirit to their performances of Bach and Beethoven, as opposed to those of Liszt,

---

[39] Burkholder, "Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music," 78 - 81.
[40] Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 283.
[41] Korsyn, "Brahms Research," 90. Korsyn quotes Paul de Man, "Literary History and Literary Modernity," in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd edn. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 76, and Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 295.

Schumann or Chopin, for example. If Brahms was able to reference his past while anticipating our present in ways that lay beyond the intellectual reach of his contemporaries, then so too are pianists expected to emphasize his (and their own) ahistorical cerebral 'otherness' in performance.

> Getting down to the playing itself, these are interpretations that feel as if they get right to the heart of Brahms the man and the musician with the impression they weave of Romantic expression melded with **deference** to **classical form and sensibilities**.[42]
>
> Her impulsive dynamic surges and wide degree of tempo fluctuation arguably undercut the Brahms F minor Sonata's **inherent classicism**.[43]
>
> Listeners expecting a semblance of **classical propriety**...probably will cringe at Sokolov's **outsized rubatos**, steroid-induced **dynamic contrasts**, and **highly idiosyncratic** tempo fluctuations.[44]
>
> While Kissin often can be a capricious score reader regarding dynamics and phrasings, he follows Brahms' indications **virtually to the letter**, honouring every accent, distinguishing each legato from non-legato articulation, and so forth. Much **thought** and **planning** seems to govern Kissin's interpretation.[45]

---

[42] Charlotte Gardner, "A triumph of Brahmsian thought, with playing that gets right to the heart of the composer," review of *Brahms Works for Solo Piano, Vol.1*, Barry Douglas (piano), Chandos CHAN 10716 (CD), 2012, in *BBC Music Review* (March 29, 2012), accessed January 5, 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/reviews/h8pn.

[43] Jed Distler, "Brahms & Liszt: Piano Sonatas/Cechová," review of Jitka Cechová (piano), Supraphon SU 4021-2 131 (CD), 2010, accessed January 5, 2013, http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-15746/?search=1.

[44] Jed Distler, "Brahms: F minor sonata; Ballades/Sokolov," review of Grigory Sokolov (piano), OPUS 111 - 30366 (CD), 2005, accessed January 5, 2013, http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-8520/?search=1.

[45] Jed Distler, "Brahms: Piano sonata Op. 5," review of Evgeny Kissin (piano), RCA 09026-638862 (CD), 2001, accessed January 5, 2013, http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-9506/?search=1.

For nineteenth-century Brahmsians, the ego-driven excesses and undisciplined coloristic effects of Liszt, Berlioz and Wagner's musical practices were symptomatic of fundamental psychological weakness; while Brahms's grave stoicism, ascetic self-restraint and hermitic dedication to classical formal procedures were a direct result of his formidable mental control. For his part, Harding observes that instead of "trying to cast his utterances in [Liszt and Chopin's] mould, and to achieve thereby something of their meteoric fame and universal acceptance, [Brahms] chose instead the harder path of the purely personal type of utterance."[46] Stojowski remarks that, "Brahms was conservative...and [had] little patience with the indiscretions and absurdities into which hero-worship [was] liable to degenerate"; while Adler notes that Brahms was "a self-effacing artist, not a vainglorious virtuoso...[he] tempered imagination with finished craftsmanship."[47]

Even Deiters seizes the opportunity to make a polemical assertion of Brahms's intellectual otherness in his lamentation of the difficulty of writing a biography about someone who so courted obscurity: "Some are men of thought, others of action...some mark their course through life by the exercise of personal attributes, others are known only through their works. It is the invisible, almost impersonal, men of thought that give the biographer trouble." Indeed, for Brahms's most loyal followers, this reticence towards lionization and public display only reinforced their belief that, "his real life, the object of all his sympathies and energies, [was] that which passe[d] within"[48] - his intellect-driven craft.

---

[46] Howard-Jones, "Brahms in His Pianoforte Music," 122.
[47] Stojowski, "Recollections," 143; Adler and Strunk, "Johannes Brahms," 130.
[48] Deiters, "Johannes Brahms," 9 - 10.

Brahms's quiet devotion to historical formal compositional procedures was naturally posited as musically and intellectually superior to Wagner's reduction of "the musical to a handmaiden to excite the superficial feelings of the viewer...by pandering to the decorative and the sensual...[and] play[ing] to a crowd of dilettantes and philistines."[49] Conversely, the Wagnerians interpreted Brahms's eschewal of fame and coloristic effect as proof that he was "ungifted, pretentious, [and] lacking in all creative power," due to a "lack of charm, soul and personality." In their opinion, Brahms was the creator of "bad, ugly, dead music," and a "pompous duffer."[50] Indeed, as Hermann Abert remarks, "Wagner's scintillant [sic] power of radiance is something [Brahms] lacks completely; far more inclined to outline than to colour, he reveals the multiple, interlaced web of his voices with a certain acerb [sic] realism...[leading] Wagner fanatics [to] have accused Brahms of lacking tone sense, of being dry and academic."[51]

Pianists often find it difficult to communicate Brahms's antipodal stance on virtuosity and effect in an industry that bills them as larger-than-life virtuosos. As Harding cautions, Brahmsian pianists should not "intrude that aggressive personality which they are accustomed, and are expected, to exhibit in playing Schumann and Chopin...for with [Brahms], self-abnegation is even more absolutely necessary: the identity of the executant must be entirely lost in the work he interprets."[52] Indeed, many pianists leave the performance of Brahms's solo piano works for the more autumnal

---

[49] Botstein, "Brahms and Nineteenth-Century Painting,"162, adapted from Feuerbach's critique of Makart (one of Wagner's favorite painters), in Julius Allgeyer, *Anselm Feuerbach*, ed. Carl Neumann, vol. II (2nd edn. Berlin, 1904), 450 - 59. Botstein argues that Feuerbach's contempt for Makart was based on the same elements Brahms loathed in Wagner.
[50] Harding, "Some Thoughts," 160 - 61.
[51] Hermann Abert and Frederick H. Martens, "Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms," *The Musical Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (April, 1927): 342, accessed December 15, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/738416.
[52] Harding, "Some Thoughts," 163.

stages of their careers, having already forged their reputations on the extroverted mettle-proving warhorses of the nineteenth-century piano repertoire. Once established as capable virtuosos, only then do they feel comfortable assuming the ascetic temperament required in the performance of Brahms's piano works: where musical expression is expected to emanate from the music itself, unfettered by the ego-driven intrusion of a mentally unrestrained performer.

> Everything is kept **smartly** on the move, nothing sounds rushed, ill-focused or merely streamlined. This is equally true of his Brahms where, once more, there is never a hint of anything **portentous or inflated**.[53]

> What unfaltering **poise** and tonal translucence he achieves...his playing is so finely 'worked' and **controlled** that even here he captures a **reflection** and nostalgia at the heart of such music... [K]eeping its exultance on **a tight rein**, he remains **musicianly** to his fingertips...locat[ing] an underlying poetry denied to less **subtle** or less engaging pianists.[54]

> Radu Lupu is not the most charismatically compelling of performers. He trudges onstage, sits down at the piano like a court stenographer at a **tedious** trial, and proceeds **dispassionately** to do his job. It's just that the execution of his particular job results in beautiful music. What he lacks in flair, both personally and musically, Mr. Lupu makes up in **poetic seriousness** rendered by what might be called **self-effacing** technique. He doesn't dazzle with pointillistic runs and cosmic banging.[55]

---

[53] Bryce Morrison, "Brahms - Haydn - Schubert," review of Rudolf Firkusny (piano), BBC Legends/IMG Artists D BBCL4I73-2, (CD), 2006, recorded live January 4, 1969, in *Gramophone* (Awards Issue, 2006): 101.
[54] Bryce Morrison, "Brahms," review of Libor Novacek (piano), Landor LAN285, (CD), 2008, in *Gramophone* (October 2008): 85.
[55] John Rockwell, "German Bill by Radu Lupu," review of Radu Lupu (piano), in *New York Times Music Review* (January 29, 1991), accessed December 29, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/29/arts/review-piano-german-bill-by-radu-lupu.html?gwh=A7D31769948DA4FCE162E27842A872D2.

> In these pieces, Mr. Zimerman was at his **poetic** best, and he showed his listeners an unusual form of **virtuosity**: not the **self-aggrandizing** kind, but the kind that **magnifies** the music.[56]

It is no coincidence that many of the aforementioned reviews praise pianists whose onstage personae evidence some self-effacing communion between artist and work, as late-Romantic discussions of Brahms's psychological control often use expressly spiritual language. Take for example ideas related to his ascetic devotion to absolute composition; his moralistic renunciation of effect and virtuosity; or his self-abnegating deference to the composer-deities of the past: "Bach and Mozart were his musical gods; [and in] Beethoven's gigantic footsteps he followed deferently [sic] and devoutly."[57] Even Brahms's ahistorical otherness is frequently described in religious tongues, as evidenced by the obituary notice calling him "the true apostle who will write revelations which many Pharisees will be unable to explain, even after centuries."[58]

As usual, Brahms's most vocal supporters catalysed this quasi-religious trope in the pursuit of their own anti-Wagnerian agendas. As Nicole Grimes points out in reference to observations by Daniel Beller-McKenna and Constantin Floros, Schumann's "Neue Bahnen" article in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* introduces Brahms as "the chosen one," "the one who would and must appear," and "by whose cradle heroes stand guard": a potent mix of biblical and mythological imagery from Romantic literary

---

[56] Allan Kozinn, "An Evening Given to Brahms," review of Krystian Zimerman (piano), in *New York Times Music Review* (May 2, 2002), accessed December 29, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/05/02/arts/music-in-review-classical-music-an-evening-given-to-brahms.html?gwh=C8BAB101CFA95296F3A1E53218754123.
[57] Adler and Strunk, "Johannes Brahms," 121.
[58] "Johannes Brahms," *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, (May 1, 1897): 298.

traditions and the Christian Gospels, intended to resonate with both readers and Brahms alike. Around the same time, Schumann also describes Brahms as "eagle": a well-known moniker for John the Apostle, author of the Book of Revelation.[59] As Sandra McColl observes, all of this could very well have been interpreted by the more devoutly religious as idolatry or blasphemy, were it not for the fact that Schumann only ever refers to Brahms as the Messiah of German music.[60]

Just months after the publication of "Neue Bahnen," a reviewer for the *NZfM* appropriates Schumann's religious language after Brahms's first public Leipzig concert, writing: "We find ourselves in the presence of one of those highly gifted natures, an artist by the grace of God."[61] Brahms's first formal teacher of composition, Edward Marxsen, is also reported to have described his student as "a future priest of art, who should proclaim in a new idiom through his works, its high, true, and lasting principles"; while Brahms's *Musical Times* obituary notice extolls "that asceticism mingled with poetic mysticism which is so characteristic of Brahms's genius," and "the catholicity of his taste."[62]

Schumann's designation of Brahms as the 'Messiah of German music' assumed profound philosophical and nationalistic implications in 1859, when Franz Brendel (the Hegelian-minded editor of the *NZfM*) announced that the *Neudeutsche Schule* belonged

---

[59] Robert Schumann, "Neue Bahnen," *NZfM* 39, no. 18 (1853): 185 - 86; Daniel Beller-McKenna, "Brahms, the Bible, and Post-Romanticism," 24 - 34; Constantin Floros, *Brahms und Bruckner* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1980), 102 - 7; and 'Brahms: Der 'Messias' und 'Apostel.' Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte des Artikels 'Neue Bahnen'; in Grimes, "In Search of Absolute Inwardness," 154 - 55.

[60] Sandra McColl, "A Model German," *The Musical Times*, 138, no. 1849 (March 1997): 10, accessed December 15, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1003516.

[61] Ferdinand Gleich, "Kleine Zeitung," *NZfM,* 40, no.1 (1 January, 1854): 8, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 214 - 15.

[62] Charles M. Joseph, "The Origins of Brahms's Structural Control," *College Music Symposium*, 21, no.1 (Spring, 1981): 9, accessed December 15, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40375155"; "Johannes Brahms," *The Musical Times* (May 1, 1897): 298 - 99.

to Liszt (a Hungarian), Berlioz (a Frenchman) and Wagner. As Richard Taruskin asserts, in the post-Hegelian/revolutionary context of Brendel's statement, a new conception of German-ness had emerged whereby "one showed oneself a German not ethnically but spiritually, by putting oneself in humanity's vanguard." Given this context, the language of "Neue Bahnen" thus references a mixture of nationalistic and pietistic ideology essential to Schumann's argument that the saviour of German music ought to at least be German.[63]

Schumann also describes Brahms in "Neue Bahnen" as "a musician who would reveal his mastery not in gradual stages but like Minerva would spring fully armed from Kronos's head."[64] According to Grimes, Schumann's invocation of the Roman goddess associated with wisdom, owls and philosophy can also be seen as an attack on Brendel, whose 1845 inaugural address as newly-appointed editor of *NZfM* contained a passage from the preface to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: "The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk."[65] For Brendel, Minerva symbolized his belief that philosophy, in the form of music criticism, should prescribe how music ought to be. Grimes convincingly interprets Schumann's article as an attempt to "banish Minerva's owl, returning to the goddess herself [music] the importance she was due, but that had been eclipsed in recent years in the journal in favour of the significance of the owl."[66]

Alongside such pietistic, nationalistic and philosophical language, one also finds frequent references to the notions of loftiness and immortality in late-Romantic

---

[63] Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 422, in Grimes, "In Search of Absolute Inwardness," 154.
[64] Schumann, "Neue Bahnen," *NZfM* 39, no. 18 (1853): 185 - 86, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 66.
[65] Franz Brendel, 'Zur Einleitung,' *NZfM* 22, no.1 - 2 (1 January 1845): 1, in Grimes, "In Search of Absolute Inwardness," 155.
[66] Grimes, "In Search of Absolute Inwardness," 156.

discussions of Brahms's canonic identity. Harding describes Brahms as having a "high ideal of art and lofty conceptions of duty in regard to it," while Parker asserts that Brahms's music reaches "the heights, like a spiritual Matterhorn, and carries us definitely to the rare and elevated places."[67] Schenker again evokes Brahms's classicist lineage in his observation that "Brahms's rejection of mere appearance results from his deep involvement with...strict counterpoint...which Beethoven termed 'the eternal religion'"; while Max Reger states that, " Brahms's immortality will never be just [his] 'inclination' to the old masters, but...that he knew how to release his newly breathed spiritual moods on the basis of his own spiritual personality."[68] Even Max Kalbeck's obituary for Brahms evocatively reinforces his great friend's musico-religious canonic identity:

> What would rise in the spirit must descend in the flesh; what would live, must die. The cruel law of an inevitable and puzzling dark will of fate, which even the Son of God could not escape...Ah, and even he, the creator of immortal works, the singer of eternal songs, the first among the musicians of the present and one of the greatest masters of all peoples and times, the saviour, the upholder, and the guardian of German music, the worthy and equal successor of a Bach and Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann, must pay to nature the due sacrifice![69]

In our tendency to conflate the anecdotal biographical minutiae of Brahms's life with the aesthetic categories that mediate performances of his works, themes of asceticism, devoutness and deference continue to be reflected in our highly literal and

---

[67] Harding, "Some Thoughts," 159; Parker, "Music and The Grand Style," 162.
[68] Heinrich Schenker, quoted and trans. by Paul Mast, "Commentary on Brahms's Octaven und Quinten u. A.," *Music Forum*, 5 (1980): 151, in Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 280; Max Reger, "Degeneration und Regeneration in der Musik," *Neue Musik-Zeitung* 29 (1907): 51, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 256 - 57.
[69] Max Kalbeck, 'Feuilleton: Johannes Brahms,' *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (7 May 1897): 1, in McColl, "A Model German," 10.

solemnly self-effacing interpretations of Brahms's scores; while lofty, timeless and eternal Brahms performances are those that conscientiously transcend overt historical markers. Performers who successfully capture the rarefied, pensive and emotionally austere nature of Brahms's music are said to have conquered the seduction, immorality, heresy and hedonism of the cults of virtuosity and effect.

> The Schumann Sonata, hectic and flecked with finger-slips, is not impressive. However, there is a gorgeous, **hymn-like simplicity** to his unfolding of the selection of Brahms intermezzos.[70]
>
> **Tough love** is a prevailing Brahmsian trait, and here it is condensed into something not only **ascetic** but also uncharacteristically short. Such tension runs through the entire Brahms corpus: **austerity**, militantly enforced, **beating back** the lyrical rushes of sentiment and effusiveness.[71]
>
> Angelich's absorption into this **rarefied** world seems totally **unselfconscious** and complete.
>
> The slow movement banished **hedonism**. Even its most **heavenly** moment - as the piano climbs in steep intervals against two suspended clarinets - took on a **moral** tone. Mr. Brendel's final B-flat chord was not a fond farewell but a clear-eyed **affirmation**.[72]

---

[70] Andrew Clements, "Brahms: Ballades; Intermezzos; Schubert: Piano Sonata in E Minor D566; Schumann: Piano Sonata No. 2 in G minor," review of Wilhelm Kempff (piano), BBC Legends BBCL 4114-2, (CD), 2001, recorded live at Queen Elizabeth Hall London in 1969 and 1972, in *The Guardian* (June 27, 2003), accessed January 3, 2013, http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2003/jun/27/classicalmusicandopera.artsfeatures2?INTCMP=S

[71] Bernard Holland, "Trios From Brahms: Challenges for All Involved," review of the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, in *New York Times Music Review* (November 2, 2006), accessed January 3, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/02/arts/music/02trio.html?gwh=02AE32F637D7EE04BC55380D74451D6F.

[72] Bernard Holland, "Exploring Brahms's Dual Nature," review of Alfred Brendel (piano) and the New York Philharmonic, in *New York Times Music Review* (May 19, 1990), accessed January 23, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/1990/05/19/arts/review-music-exploring-brahms-s-dual-nature.html.

> Also, slow movements could have a still more **inward** quality to convey that brooding **self-communion** which is so characteristic of this composer.[73]

If one imagines God as an all-knowing master architect, it is no wonder that contemporaneous expressions of Brahmsian spirituality tend to coexist alongside ideas related to his mastery of musical form, unity, coherence and organicism. Take Adler's assertion for example, that "in Brahms's music the intellectual element often predominates…he buil[ds] with the most laborious precision, as if acknowledging...the validity of the biblical admonition, 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread.'"[74] Underpinned as always by assumptions about Brahms's unwavering psychological control, the idea of Brahms as "the archetype of a master musical engineer,"[75] later becomes further entrenched in the writings of Schoenberg, Schenker and Tovey: men for whom Brahms's cerebral constructionist procedures held almost religious appeal.

As Kevin Korsyn points out, concepts such as unity, organicity and coherence carried profound religious and philosophical connotations in the nineteenth-century, after properties previously attributed to the soul by theology (immortality, indivisibility, unity, integrity) became attached to the Romantic work of art in the wake of sceptical philosophy. In an example of what Korsyn calls our "tendency to use art to recuperate stable and reassuring ideas of selfhood,"[76] we continue to be invested in the concept of musical unity because it is in fact our own unity that is at stake. Perhaps this self-preserving ideological obsession with unity explains the ardour with which Brahms's

---

[73] James Jolly, "Brahms's Piano Sonatas," review of Julius Katchen (piano), Decca London 455 247-2LC6 (CD), 1997, recorded 1962 - 66, in *Gramophone* (September 2012), accessed January 23, 2013, http://www.gramophone.co.uk/editorial/brahmss-piano-sonatas.
[74] Adler and Strunk, "Johannes Brahms," 125.
[75] Joseph, "The Origins of Brahms's Structural Control," 7.
[76] Korsyn, "Brahms Research," 91.

contemporaries championed his rigorously controlled and coherent formal procedures, to the detriment of the Wagnerians' lowbrow preference for coloristic effect. Critic Adolf Schubring explicitly connects formal coherence to the control of one's intellect, writing:

> He who does not understand how to work up the individual motives and motivic particles of the theme into new characteristic shapes by means of mosaic combination, continuation, expansion; he may for a while - if he has the tools - delight the untutored multitudes with his potpourris, or startle them with prickling harmonies, tone colours, and orchestral effects achieved by simple means. But a logical musician he is not.[77]

Brahms's masterful organic formalism is also frequently mentioned in accounts bemoaning the death of German classicism, especially with regards to some impending 'atrophy' of the organizing principles of rhythm, harmony, tonality and form. As Burkholder notes, "Wagner is preeminent in such histories, which view the prolonged dissonances, delayed resolutions, and yearning chromaticism of *Tristan und Isolde* as harbingers of the coming collapse, [while] Brahms is typically bypassed as a conservative in a progressive epoch, fighting a losing battle for 'classical' musical values and forms."[78] In 1933, Lourie invokes Brahms's use of the unified musical language of German classicism to criticize early-twentieth-century impressionist and atonal practices: "[Such currents] abjur[e] this unity and pursu[e] an undeviating course towards a state of extreme instability...Free will enters on the scene, and the caprice of the composer creates an endless series of individual, artificial scales."[79]

---

[77] Adolf Schubring, "Die Schumann'sche Schule: Schumann und Brahms. Brahms's vierhändige Schumann-Variationen," *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 3 (1868), 41 - 42, 49 - 51, trans. Walter Frisch, "Brahms and Schubring," 275, in Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 271.
[78] Burkholder, "Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music," 75 - 76.
[79] Lourie, "The Crisis of Form," 99.

Brahms's cerebral constructionist practices were a bitter point of contention amongst opponents who accused him of hiding a paucity of genuine poetic inspiration behind his rigorous formalist procedures. As the great Wagnerian conductor Felix Weingartner asserts in 1897: "[Brahms's music is] scientific music, composed of sonorous forms and phrases; [but] it is not the language of humanity...which moves and stirs us up to the depth of our being, because...[such] music is artistic [while Brahms's] is artificial."[80] One year later, Walker responds to such allegations by explicitly correlating formal control with the control of one's intellect and even sanity:

> [Brahms] do[es] not look upon design as a mere academic framework nor as a hindrance to imaginative flights, but as... a thing of beauty in itself, and none the less beautiful for being subject to a certain restraint....[He] balances his emotions by the necessity of their presentation in beautiful form, so he balances his structure by the necessity of the beauty of the material it has to deal with. I cannot personally understand how some people cannot find beauty and emotion in Brahms...The beauty, no doubt, is quiet, and the passion is sane; but to deny that the beauty and the passion are to be found in Brahms's work as a whole is, I think, to show oneself...incapable of distinguishing between beauty and sensuousness, and between emotion and hysteria.[81]

Walker goes on to further praise Brahms's avoidance of programmatic associations and coloristic nuances by stating that, "it is always the mood, not the thing that is painted. And though the mood is always represented with matchless fidelity, it is not painted word by word, but as a whole, and consequently structural interests never

---

[80] Felix Weingartner, *The Symphony Writers Since Beethoven*, trans. A. Bles (London, 1897), 60 - 61, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 238.
[81] Ernest Walker, "Brahms," *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 25th Session (1898 - 1899): 118, accessed May 26, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/765156.

suffer."[82] Here, Walker hints at yet another fundamental element of Brahmsian coherence: the suppression of local emphasis, colour and effect in favour of overall line and form. Indeed, 'good' Brahms performances are those that are first and foremost structurally elucidative: where the composer's meticulously crafted chordal, contrapuntal and rhythmic textures are clearly delineated, yet never to the detriment of the unity and coherence of a work's larger structure.

In order to accomplish this, pianists tend to link Brahms's local phrases into long horizontal metaphrases; they maintain consistent moods and tempi within sections of works, while creating dramatic contrasts between those sections; and they tend to restrict their use of unnotated expressive devices like *rubato* to the outer boundaries of these unified musical spaces. Some pianists push the notion of unity even further by linking multi-sectioned works with a single fundamental underlying rhythm. Interestingly, successfully structural Brahms performances are often described in linguistic terms: by 'accounts' where 'phrases' and 'arguments' are 'articulated' cogently, without subverting the overall 'message' or 'paragraph' by succumbing to the 'rhetoric' of virtuosity or effect. In performances of Brahms's cerebral master blueprints, everything must be in its rightful place: in deferential service to the whole.

> In his last three sets of piano pieces, all unnecessary **rhetoric** is purged from Brahms's music. There is no **hectoring** or **lecturing**, no celebration of **virtuosity** for its own sake. Lars Vogt is the perfect kind of **thoughtful**, **unflashy** pianist for **emotionally contained** world; his playing never attempts to **impose** his own interpretative ideas on music that has its own **organic coherence**.[83]

---

[82] Walker, "Brahms," 124.
[83] Clements, "Brahms: Intermezzi Op. 117; Piano Pieces Op. 118 & 119," review of Lars Vogt (piano), EMI Classics 7243 5 57543 2 5 (CD), 2003, in *The Guardian* (March 5, 2004), accessed

The multifarious strands of Brahms' dense, complex and contrapuntal writing are beautifully **balanced**, with a sure **structural** grasp that carries the ear and sustains the musical **argument** equally **convincingly** across individual phrases and long, multi-sectioned pieces.[84]

Throwing caution to the wind, Mr. Zimerman nevertheless maintained a fine **equilibrium**...In the last fortissimo outburst, the bubble finally burst, and the passage lost **coherence**.[85]

Displays an instinctively warm and sensitive style that befits the lyrical side of Brahms's **intricately textured** shorter works. A **calm** demeanour and smooth **sense of line** help sustain his **muted, introspective** conception of the Op 118 group's A major Intermezzo, together with his **measured** pacing of the concluding E flat minor piece.[86]

In [Brahms's] "Handel" Variations, Mr. Lorango also showed the **foresight** to bind many segments together with what was basically a **common tempo**.[87]
Notable both for the full-bodied, golden tone of the piano and his ability to **hold together** both long movements and large **structures**.[88]

October 25, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2004/mar/05/classicalmusicandopera.shopping1.

[84] Gardner, "A Triumph of Brahmsian Thought," in *BBC Music Review* (March 29, 2012).

[85] James R. Oestreich, "Krystian Zimerman Brings Balance to Brahms and Liszt," review of Krystian Zimerman (piano), in *New York Times Music Review* (March 29, 1990), accessed January 9, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/1990/03/29/arts/review-piano-krystian-zimerman-brings-balance-to-brahms-and-liszt.html.

[86] Jed Distler, "Brahms," review of Romain Descharmes (piano), *Brahms Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 5., Six Pieces, Op. 118*, Claudio CR5786-2 (CD), 2007, in *Gramophone* (April 2008): 80.

[87] Bernard Holland, "Piano: Thomas Lorango," review of Thomas Lorango (piano), in *New York Times Music Review* (February 7, 1988), accessed January 9, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/1988/02/07/arts/piano-thomas-lorango.html?gwh=37DA005A03DA4643EE080808F10776C3.

[88] James Jolly, "Brahms's Piano Sonatas," review of Antti Siirala (piano), Ondine ODE1044-2 (CD), 2004, in *Gramophone* (September 2012).

> The music emerged with **multi-levelled**, **thoughtfully** contoured textures that were full-bodied, **clear and cogent**...Every piece told a **story** in **sweeping paragraphs and long phrases** that allowed Brahms' cross-rhythmic operations their due.[89]

As in Walker's invocation of the trope of sanity with reference to Brahms's adherence to classical formal procedures, discussions of the coherence and cogency of composers' mental states are found throughout the documentary historical record. As Brahms's obituary in *The Musical Times* reads: "We ought to be doubly thankful for the gift of those...whose genius has reached its full maturity, and who have passed away before any sign of weakness or senility was apparent in their work."[90] Aside from Brahms's lengthy and productive career however, it seems that his supporters had more metaphysically portentous reasons to emphasize his hale and hearty mind.

In his 1926 polemic on genius and health, J. F. Rogers cites Bernard Shaw's definition of a genius as being "a person who, seeing deeper than other people, has a different set of ethical valuations from theirs and has energy enough to give effort to this extra vision." Rogers later observes that, "idleness and introspection are ruinous to health. Health is developed most by the exercise of all one's faculties in absorbing work."[91] In light of the turn-of-the-century Brahms-Wagner dialectics and Goethe's distinction of the healthy Classic from the sick Romantic, Rogers's statements were likely read as a confirmation of Brahms's genius and a denial of the New Germans', whose musical practices were seen as mere products of their fantastic and brooding inner poetic reveries.

---

[89] Jed Distler, "Everything's coming up Rose," review of Jerome Rose (piano), in *Gramophone* (July 2011), accessed December 29, 2012, http://www.gramophone.co.uk/blog/piano-notes/everythings-coming-up-rose.
[90] "Brahms," *The Musical Times* (May 1, 1897): 297.
[91] James Frederick Rogers, "Genius and Health," *The Scientific Monthly* 23, no. 6 (December 1926): 509, 518, accessed December 14, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/7670.

In 1919 however, Cyril Scott evokes the language of psychological disease in his observation that *both* factions of the Brahms-Wagner dialectic were guilty of a kind of monomania: a term he takes from Nietzsche, but that flourished in turn-of-the-century literary, musical and medical discourses:

> For on the one hand, there are those who commit the fault of looking upon the whole of modernity...as a kind of moral disease; a kind of temptation of St. Anthony to allure them away from the path of old musical righteousness; or, on the other hand, there are those who...look upon modern music as the only music, condemning its forerunning creators as 'good for noughts' or antiquated idlers.[92]

Indeed, Francesca Brittan links nineteenth-century artistic discourses on monomania to the concept of the *idée fixe*, which she traces back to E. T. A Hoffman's 1814 story "Automata." In this tale, a young artist becomes obsessed by an exquisite melody sung by a mysterious woman, to the point where woman and song become "inextricably linked as a malignant musico-erotic fetish that begins to exert a hostile influence on [the artist's] 'whole existence' ...[as] he gives way to a 'distracted condition of the mind.'"[93]

In most of the tales surveyed by Brittan, the afflicted suffer from severe obsession, melancholy, restlessness, hallucinations, suicidal despair and madness: symptoms that occur at the musico-autobiographical intersection of Berlioz's own obsessive amorous fixation, and that of the protagonist in his *Symphonie Fantastique*. As

---

[92] Cyril Scott, "The Two Attitudes," *The Musical Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (April 1919): 151 - 52, accessed December 15, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/738072.

[93] E. T. A. Hoffman, "Automata," trans. Major Alexander Ewing in *The Best Tales of Hoffman,* ed. E. F. Bleiler (New York: Dover, 1967), 100 - 101, in Francesca Brittan, "Berlioz and the Pathological Fantastic: Melancholy, Monomania, and Romantic Autobiography," *19th-Century Music* 29, no. 3 (Spring, 2006): 212, accessed January 13, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/ncm.2006.29.3.211.

Brittan points out, the condition suffered by Berlioz and his protagonist would have been quite familiar to nineteenth-century doctors, as a burgeoning field of 'medicine of the imagination' was making mental function finally accessible to rational examination, thus bringing insanity to the attention of the medical community. In 1810, Jean Étienne Dominique Esquirol theorized a new disorder of the nervous system called 'monomania': a mental state whose primary symptom was a pathological fixation on a single idea - the *idée fixe.* Brittan surmises that Berlioz, as a former medical student and son of a doctor, would probably have been aware of Esquirol's work.[94]

Furthermore, in contemporaneous literary works featuring monomania, the disease almost always manifests in artistic, introverted, sentimental, passionate and heroic figures, thus "establish[ing] monomania as a quintessentially Romantic illness," and creating a long-standing linkage of insanity and imagination.[95] Perhaps for the Romantics, monomania carried with it the aspirational mark of true poetic inspiration. Indeed in Esquirol's opinion, those most susceptible were: "Nervous-sanguine temperaments, persons endowed with a brilliant, warm and vivid imagination; minds of a meditative and exclusive cast, which seem to be susceptible only of a series of thoughts and emotions; individuals who, through self-love, vanity, pride, and ambition, abandon themselves to their reflections, to exaggerated projects and unwarrantable pretensions."[96]

To nineteenth-century Brahmsians, Berlioz must have represented the ultimate conflation of Romanticism and insanity: here was a lovesick poet-receiver of ecstatic inspiration who spun the products of his idle introspections and monomaniacal

---

[94] Brittan, "Berlioz," 220, 223.
[95] Ibid., 228.
[96] Jean Étienne Dominique Esquirol, *Des maladies mentales: considèrées sous les rapports médical, hygiénique et médico-légal*, vol. 2 (Paris: Baillière, 1838), 29, in Brittan, "Berlioz," 221.

hallucinations into 'exaggerated projects and unwarrantable pretensions,' while succumbing to a hostile and distracted condition of the mind. It isn't clear whether Cyril Scott's use of the term 'monomania' was intended to invoke Berlioz's condition and Romanticism in general, but perhaps we are beginning to understand the urgency and ferocity with which Brahms's supporters underlined his thoroughly hale and controlled mind in contemporaneous musical dialectics. Unfortunately however, Berlioz's insanity bore a rather inconvenient resemblance to yet another intersection of Romanticism and disease: the total mind-body disintegration of Brahms's mentor, Robert Schumann.

We began this chapter with Korsyn's discussion of the *idée fixe* of unity in scholarly discussions of Brahms's life and music. I argued that unity, like many so-called 'characteristic' Brahmsian qualities, could be distilled to an even deeper fixation of psychological control. Through Cyril Scott we've discussed how the *idée fixe* can also be related to dialectical beliefs on both sides of the Brahms-Wagner divide, and to intersections of insanity in Berlioz's life and work. I have also shown how the ideology of psychological control continues to mediate performances of Brahms's piano music, to the extent whereby it has itself become a kind of 'malignant musico-erotic fetish': a "species of veneration...which causes one to sink into a condition of stagnating contentedness."[97]

> Mr. Lorango has neither an overpowering technique nor a brilliant tone...but when this music demanded sustained, concentrated power...it seemed to fade...to a wanness I suspect was as much **mental** as **physical**.[98]

[97] Cyril Scott, "The Two Attitudes," 151 - 52.
[98] Holland, "Thomas Lorango," *New York Times Music Review* (February 7, 1988).

1.3) Brahmsian Bodies

> The great man as a rule is of superior physique and vigour, and the greater the man of genius the more regard he has for the physical foundations on which his work depends.[99]

While the theme of Brahmsian psychological control continues to be enthusiastically reinforced in both scholarly and practice-based circles, the language of modern Brahms style has important corporeal subtexts that tend to be conspicuously under-explored. Like the trope of mental fitness, discussions of Brahms's hale and hearty body are found throughout contemporaneous musical discourses, and gave rise to words such as modesty, robustness, power, masculinity and German-ness: terms that are still used to describe successful Brahms performances today, though usually as related to temperament as opposed to a particular bodily state.

Indeed in the years since WWII, Brahms has increasingly come to be seen as so corporeally controlled that he is no longer 'of his body': probably as a result of our continued attempts to rescue him from the scourges of lovesick Romanticism as so tragically exemplified by Schumann, and from the uncomfortable chauvinistic and nationalistic realities of his actual historical context. It is my belief however, that to sever Brahms from his body for reasons of modern aesthetic ideology and historical hindsight is to dissolve a fundamental epistemological link to understanding the aesthetic categories by which we still evaluate performances of his music today.

---

[99] James Frederick Rogers, "The Health of Musicians," *The Musical Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (October 1926): 619, accessed December 14, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/738343.

Brahms's modesty of physical appearance seems to have been a favourite topic of discussion amongst late-Romantic observers who were often shocked to discover that he didn't look the way he sounds in his music. In 1926, J. F. Rogers links Brahms's humble stature to his classicist lineage by remarking that 'great men' "have usually been of medium stature, the best height for concentration of bodily power: Beethoven was five feet five, with broad shoulders and firmly built... [and] Brahms was rather short, square and solidly built, the very impersonation of energy."[100] Robert Schauffler also remembers Brahms's unassuming physique: "When one looked above the homespun body to the admirable head... the great, blue eyes, the aristocratic modelling of the nose...there the poet began - the tone-poet of genius."[101]

Schauffler goes on to describe the composer's style of dress as one that "would have been a windfall for a comedian playing the country cousin," as Brahms hated collars, ties, cuffed shirts, and frequently sported jackets with patches on the elbows - betraying "his industry and Spartan economy."[102] Upon overhearing a discussion on the subject of fine men's stockings at a dinner party one evening, Brahms is reported to have mischievously responded, "'See how elegant mine are.' And, raising his trowser's [sic] leg...revealed his bare ankle." It seems as though Brahms's modest country manners could also astonish those meeting him for the first time, as recalled by Dr. Otto Julius Bauer:

> [Brahms] gave me a glass to hold, poured cognac into it, and intentionally made it overflow. Then he seized my dripping hand and licked it off. I was stupefied with

[100] Rogers, "Genius and Health," 510.
[101] Robert Haven Schauffler, "Brahms, Poet and Peasant," *The Musical Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (Oct., 1932): 554, accessed December 15, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/738938.
[102] Schauffler, "Poet and Peasant," 549 - 51.

> surprise, and asked him why he did that. 'Oh,' was the answer, 'the doctors forbid me to drink; but they do not say a word about licking.'[103]

On the subject of Brahms's habits of food and drink, while Rogers notes that great men have been excellent eaters and drinkers because they need "an adequate supply of fuel to keep [their] engine working at such a pitch of perfection," he again invokes the trope of modesty by comparing Brahms's epicurean self-control to Beethoven's: whose "breakfast was usually coffee and his supper a plate of soup." According to Rogers, "the great man has been as temperate in drink as in meats...[because] he is too keenly conscious of the depressing effects of alcohol not to avoid its influence."[104] Apparently, the mental control of great men can also help them resist the temptations of gluttony.

While few pianists are aware of Brahms's rather squat physical proportions, preferring instead to imagine him as they imagine his music (broad, powerful, solidly built, square, energetic, industrious, economical), still fewer realize that much of this language stems from descriptions of the composer's surprising physical *modesty*. In any case, the notion of sheer muscular power tempered by subtly modest restraint forms the basis of the aesthetic ideology of Brahmsian corporeal control: whereby pianists are expected to adopt a deep, resonant, weighty, straightforward, and full-bodied physical approach to tone production; where difficult passages are to be easily dispatched without descending into display or aggressiveness; and where melodic material is to be plainly declaimed as opposed to whispered or coaxed.

---

[103] Ibid., 557.
[104] Rogers, "Genius and Health," 513 - 15.

Every pianist has a special sound world of his own. Rubinstein's is **light** and **translucent** rather than **deep** and **saturated**, and from that point of view I would not call him the ideal Brahmsian.[105]

American pianist Garrick Ohlsson is presenting a **solid** Brahms diet. Last week, he headed a **subtle**, **muscular** reading of the *Piano Concerto No. 1*.[106]

Kissin tosses off the first-movement development's treacherous octave jumps better than other pianists manage single notes. He **grasps** Brahms' thick, widely spaced chords with the **force** and **grip** of a magnet sweeping up piles of nails.[107]

It takes the **whole body** to play the Brahms concerto. You cannot dispatch this thick, chord-strewn work with fingers alone...Gould's playing sounds **anything but effortless**. He gets through it, but **not easily**.[108]

It is tempting to imagine [Brahms] as he sounds, especially in his piano music: **big and burly**, with hands like huge maws, able to swallow octavefuls of notes at a gulp. One imagines, in fact, someone as **strapping and powerful** as Garrick Ohlsson... Many pianists can **grapple** with this music, but few **command** it with such apparent **ease** as Mr. Ohlsson, who...produced **great masses of sound** that never became clangourous, thanks as much to his open-throated Bösendorfer piano as to his **tremendous facility**.[109]

---

[105] Joan Chissell, "Brahms: Piano Works," review of Artur Rubinstein (piano), RCA SB6845 (LP), 1971, in *Gramophone* (July 1971): 204.
[106] Clive O'Connell, "Ohlsson Plays Brahms," review of Garrick Ohlsson (piano), in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (November 26, 2012), accessed January 2, 2013, http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/ohlsson-plays-brahms-20121125-2a1e2.html.
[107] Distler, "Brahms: Piano Sonata Op. 5," review of Evgeny Kissin, http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-9506/?search=1..
[108] Anthony Tommasini, "For Glenn Gould, Form Followed Fingers," review of *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould,* White Pine Pictures, 2009, in *New York Times Music Review* (September 24, 2010), accessed January 2, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/26/arts/music/26gould.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.
[109] James R. Oestreich, "The Piano at Full Power in Brahms," review of Garrick Ohlsson (piano) and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, in *New York Times Music Review* (January 12, 1998), accessed January 9, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/1998/01/12/arts/music-review-the-piano-at-full-power-in-brahms.html.

As evidenced by the aforementioned reviews, the language of Brahms's 'strapping and powerful' corporeal control is often positively associated with pianistic approaches that are inherently masculine: indeed, it is difficult to imagine a female pianist today who possesses even a modicum of Garrick Ohlsson's commandingly physical and unapologetically manly onstage presence. As usual, this conflation of gender and aesthetic evaluation stems from polemics in which Brahms's superior cerebral control was posited as directly symptomatic of his thoroughly masculine body; thereby implicating the more effusively lyrical, coloristic, sensual and programmatic compositional practices of his Romantic contemporaries with the less controlled bodily state of femininity. As Adler asserts, Brahms's "harmony is robust, never effeminate, and as far removed from sentimentality as his melody."[110]

In response to late-nineteenth-century insinuations that "musicians are as a class wanting in the manlier qualities," one observer argues that just as "there was no lack of virility in the character of Beethoven," "Brahms's music is the outcome of a thoroughly masculine nature": proof that "effeminacy [was] an accidental attribute in a disciple of Melpomene."[111] D. C. Parker also uses highly gendered language both to emphasize Brahms's classicist lineage and to attack the New German's repudiation of the musical past in his assertion that, "Bach's music is strong, deep, and vigorous, flowing, steady and true like a great river, and not a thing of erratic bubbles and splashes, however beautiful."[112] Clearly, the insinuation is that the hearty and hale Classic is intrinsically masculine, while the sick and weak Romantic is necessarily feminine.

---

[110] Adler and Strunk, "Johannes Brahms," 129.
[111] "Manliness in Music," *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 30, no. 558 (August 1, 1889): 460 - 61, accessed January 4, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3360514.
[112] D. C. Parker, "Music and the Grand Style," 163 - 64.

Throughout late-Romantic discussions of Brahms's genius, physicality and masculinity, one also encounters the related themes of stamina and athleticism. As Rogers stipulates, "the accomplishment of the great man...depends on his general physical development and the care which he takes of his bodily machine," because "such powerfully built bodies were storehouses of energy so abundant that it not only displayed itself in work but slopped over into muscular play."[113] This notion of a composer's body as a finely-tuned machine equipped for both toil and fun resonates in Clara Schumann's granddaughter Eugenie's memory of encountering Johannes Brahms as a child: an account that, as Moseley observes, introduces "the blond, athletic hero of a *Kinderszene* whose physical prowess stands as an auspicious metaphor for his musical gifts":[114]

> A young man with long, blond hair is performing the most daring gymnastics. He hoists himself from left to right and up and down; at last he raises himself firmly on his arms, with his legs high in the air, and a final leap lands him below in the midst of the admiring crowd of children. We Schumanns were the children, and the young man was Johannes Brahms.[115]

While posterity remembers Brahms best as an aged bearded master, his virile and "athletic musical stamina"[116] was often invoked to attack the formal weaknesses of the New Germans, who were said to "overlook the fact that musical rules are on par with the drill of the soldier: not that he may perform gymnastics when actually at war, but that he may gain the necessary strength and discipline to wield his weapon."[117] A clue to the

---

[113] Rogers, "Genius and Health," 509, 510.
[114] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 253.
[115] E. Schumann, *Erinnerungen*, 13 - 14, in Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 252.
[116] Binns, "Some Thoughts," 600.
[117] Scott, "The Two Attitudes," 158.

metaphorical clout of the trope of athleticism might be found in Brahms's purported reaction upon learning that Wagner had scaled a tree in order to escape a pack of dogs. As Kahn recalls, Brahms quickly retorted that, "he too had accomplished considerable things in tree climbing...boast[ing] still further of other gymnastic feats: for example, he had had some virtuosity in walking on his hands upside down."[118]

The language of Brahmsian masculinity and athleticism naturally conjures the opposite (and implicitly negative) states of effeminate frailty and fussily idiosyncratic affectation: qualities that, being associated with a paucity of both mental and physical control, are thus thoroughly unwelcome in Brahms performance practices today. Indeed, performances that successfully communicate Brahms's manly and athletic physical prowess are those described as healthy, robust, martial, agile; or with innuendo-laden terms such as deep, virile, strong, vigorous, thrusting and penetrating. Moments of tenderness and levity are to be noble and sportive rather than sweet and frivolous, while passages requiring sheer brute physical strength are to be executed easily, dignifiedly, and with acrobatic finesse.

> Arthur Rubinstein plays it with remarkable **vigour**. He brings out the rhythmic **urge** unmistakably, thereby helping the player-pianist over the **difficulties** of the cross-rhythms...The work unquestionably displays the composer at the **height of his powers**.[119]

---

[118] Robert Kahn, "Memories of Brahms," *Music & Letters* 28, no. 2 (April, 1947): 105, accessed January 4, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/855522.
[119] William Delasaire, "Player-Piano Notes," *The Musical Times* 67, no. 996 (February 1, 1926): 148 - 49, accessed February 5, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/912957.

> Eccentricity rules Lazic's Brahmsian roost...Extreme rubatos stop no. 1 dead in its tracks, to say nothing of no. 2′ s arch distensions – and why all of that ugly, **emasculated**, detached articulation in no. 3?[120]

> Mr. Ohlsson also has a...delightful **sportive** sense, which came into **play** in the **gambolling** finale.[121]

> The playing tells us at once that the challenging variations in sixths held no terrors for him, and the **athleticism** here is matched by a fluency in the leggiero writing of the variation that follows.[122]

> The best playing of program came just before the intermission, in the four Brahms Piano Pieces (Op. 119). The first three had a delicious, Chopinesque grace, delicate but never **unmanly**, and the Rhapsody **sauntered** forward with **martial** assurance.[123]

> Kissin opens the F minor Sonata with an **imperious thrust**...[124]

> A master of inwardness, he also sets the storm clouds scudding menacingly across No 6 and shows that he's as **swashbuckling** as the best of them in the early F sharp minor Sonata, resolving every **thorny and perverse** difficulty with **ease and lucidity**.[125]

Brahms was also known for his passionate love of long vigorous walks through the German countryside - a habit that naturally drew comparisons with Beethoven who,

---

[120] Jed Distler, "Liaisons Volume Two," review of Dejan Lazic (piano), Channel Classics 27609 SACD LIASONS vol. 2 (CD), 2009, accessed December 29, 2012, http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-15050/?search=1.
[121] Oestreich, "The Piano at Full Power," review of Garrick Ohlsson, in *New York Times Music Review* (January 12, 1998).
[122] Jolly, "Brahms's Piano Sonatas," review of Julius Katchen, in *Gramophone* (September 2012).
[123] John Rockwell, "Watts offers Four Brahms Pieces," review of Andre Watts (piano), in *New York Times Review* (April 9, 1981), accessed January 3, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/1981/04/09/arts/recital-watts-offers-4-brahms-pieces.html.
[124] Jolly, "Brahms's Piano Sonatas," review of Evgeny Kissin (piano), in *Gramophone* (September 2012).
[125] Jolly, "Brahms's Piano Sonatas," review of Libor Novacek (piano), Landor LAN285 (CD), 2008, in *Gramophone* (September 2012).

"whether it rained or snowed or hailed, or the thermometer stood an inch or two below the freezing point, took his walk in double quick time of five miles or more into the country."[126] While this might have been an example of what the Wagnerians deemed as Brahms's "play-acting as Beethoven's successor to the point of duplicating the Titan's devious ways,"[127] they had ample reason to be threatened by the comparison. As one contemporaneous observer notes, "travels and adventure and a love of Nature [have], in many great cases, proved powerful incentives to the geniuses of composers."[128]

In a further conflation of musical genius, classicism, stamina and now even Nature too, many of Brahms's supporters report that these forays "were certainly not suitable for everyone, for in spite of his alarming corpulence, Brahms always marched forward at top speed, hat in hand, so that even we young people found it hard to keep up with him."[129] Brahms's frequent walking companion Joseph Widmann recalls coming home "exhausted from trying to keep pace with the conscientious Master, who insisted on making the most of each moment...[as] the *Dithmarscher* in him always made the journey strenuous."[130] Widmann recalls one particularly perilous expedition while on vacation with Brahms just three years before the composer's death:

> His downhill pace resembled that of a rolling ball, and his companions frequently found it hard work to keep up with him, as was also the case with us that afternoon....Brahms was far ahead and, missing the way found himself on the edge of a quarry down which he

[126] Rogers, "Genius and Health, 512.
[127] Stojowski, "Recollections of Brahms," 150.
[128] "Manliness in Music," 461.
[129] Kahn, "Memories of Brahms," 103.
[130] Schauffler, "Poet and Peasant," 548 - 49. A *Dithermarscher* is a person from *Dithmarschen*: a marshy windswept district in the northerly state of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany.

> clambered and probably would not have reached the bottom safe and sound had not a man who was working close by seen him and come to his aid.[131]

Aside from concerns that these accounts would merely further encourage metaphorical associations related to Brahms's classic heritage and musical stamina, the Wagnerians had more pressing reasons to be wary of Brahms's physical engagement with Nature. As evidenced by Widmann's invocation of the term *Dithmarscher*, Brahms's outdoorsy-ness was often allied to powerful notions about the German soil, *volk* and nationalism. As Schauffler asserts, "Brahms' [sic] music is as healthy, sound, unpretentious, and vitally near the soil as the folk-tunes from which so much of it derives...and it is no mere coincidence that these are all open-air products."[132] Even Brahms's habits in performance were connected to the rough habits of the humble *volk* from which he came: "The gross sounds...that issued from [Brahms] at the keyboard were somewhat reminiscent of noises made by robust peasants in sleeping, or eating, or during violent exertion."[133]

As Moseley asserts, even Eugenie Schumann's account of Brahms's youthful athleticism suggests that he was involved with the German gymnastic movement *Turnbewegung*, whose popularity was tied to nineteenth-century German nationalism.[134] Indeed, in the wake of Schumann's polemical designation of Brahms as the 'Messiah of German Music,' Brahms's German-ness became a ubiquitous rallying cry amongst those aghast at the New Germans' claims of hyper-nationalism. This was especially true of Max

---

[131] J. V. Widmann, *Johannes Brahms in Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1898), 170, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 208 - 9.
[132] Schauffler, "Poet and Peasant," 548.
[133] Ibid., 555.
[134] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," see footnote on page 252.

Kalbeck, who saw the composer as adrift in a Vienna whose former enlightened Liberalism was being eroded by the conservative anti-Semitic policies of the clerical-political coalition of the 1880s.[135] To Kalbeck, both factions had conspired to use Wagner's music against that of the 'free-thinker and heretic' Brahms,[136] though Sandra McColl is right to point out that it was Kalbeck who pitted the two against one another in 1877 by writing: "Wagnerian music has...been made into a kind of religious and patriotic matter, so that all are confronted with the demand to nail their colours to the mast."[137]

Once aesthetic evaluations of musical works became entangled with a composer's perceived German-ness, Brahms's supporters often invoked his racial lineage in their attempts to imply that the compositional practices of the Hungarian-French-German trifecta at the head of the *Neudeutsch Schule* were less German than they claimed. As Adler asserts, "Brahms kept faith with himself, never straining for external effect, ending as he began, a German down to the ground."[138] In fact, Stojowski reports that Brahms's 'Olympian' head was even used "in a text-book of geography, as a perfect racial specimen - of which, it [was] said, Brahms felt not a little proud." Schauffler confirms this account, pointing out that "studying a good portrait of him, one feels how grossly this claim of typicality flatters, not the composer, but the so-called 'Caucasian race'" itself.[139]

Brahms's supporters also used the language of the outdoors, bodily vitality, genius and race to condemn what they perceived as the New Germans' infatuation with the exotically-flavoured works of Russian and French nationalist composers and *vice versa*.

---

[135] Margaret Notley, "Brahms as Liberal: Genre, Style, and Politics in Late 19th-Century Vienna," *19th-Century Music* 17, no. 2 (1993): 107, in McColl, "A Model German," 9.
[136] Notley, "Brahms as Liberal," 107, in Ibid., 9.
[137] Max Kalbeck, *Das Bühnenfestspiel zu Bayreuth: Eine kritische Studie* (Breslau: Schletter, 1877), 10, in Ibid., 9.
[138] Adler and Strunk, "Johannes Brahms," 123.
[139] Stojowski, "Recollections of Brahms," 143; Schauffler, "Poet and Peasant," 554.

As D. C. Parker observes, having "approached the West and breath[ed] its intellectual air, [Russian composers are] like the Chinaman who wears his native garb, but lends it piquancy by adding one or two European garments." Parker extends his painfully racist rhetoric to the French, likening German music to the oak tree, while French music is a poppy that "needs rain from the clouds to give it a fresh complexion, and a healthy appetite...if it is not to suffer the loss of vitality that results from a lack of blood-mixture."[140] Indeed according to Stojowski, the "iridescent mosaics of tones [of the French] do not proceed from the same principles that were inculcated into Brahms through the German tradition embodied in sound, word, and philosophy."[141]

Brahms biographer Walter Niemann was also particularly fixated upon the composer's corporeal German-ness, singling him out as "among the 'classicists' of the nineteenth century not only for his strongly stamped national character but for his racial makeup as well."[142] For Niemann, differences between national schools of composition were natural, desirable and directly attributable to race; and though he never explicitly singles out the Teutonic race as superior, the implication is clear. For example, he describes Germany as "the musical school mistress... the catalyst and teacher of national music in foreign lands. One gives, the other receives." In 1920 he even differentiates Brahms's racial lineage from that of his Viennese predecessors, writing:

---

[140] Parker, "Music and the Grand Style," 175, 177.
[141] Stojowski, "Recollections of Brahms," 146 - 47.
[142] Walter Niemann, *Die Musik der Gegenwart und der Letzten Vergangenheit bis zu den Romantikern, Klassizisten und Neudeutschen*, 9th - 12th ed. (Berlin: Schuster and Loeffler, 1920), in Daniel Beller-McKenna, "The Rise and Fall of Brahms the German," *Journal of Musicological Research* 20 (2001): 191.

> With Brahms...lineage and race impressed a direct and immediate stamp upon his art. Only with difficulty would one hear...that the proudly free and wild Beethoven comes from the sunny lower Rhein; that Mendelssohn, master of Italian beautiful lines, comes from the stormy and melancholic Hamburg; or that the deeply inward and impetuously fantastic Schumann comes from soft and friendly Saxony. They speak to all people, to the folk. In Brahms's music, conversely, the characteristics of his lineage, of his race...speaks completely clearly only for the people of his stock.

Interestingly, Niemann's more extensive differentiation of Brahms from Schumann draws on themes of race as well as gender:

> Brahms's character-differentiation from Schumann is easiest to grasp from a racial standpoint. As a *Niederdeutscher*, Brahms took on Schumann's heavy, serious, melancholy side...That which was Saxon in the charming disposition of Schumann, the smoothly folk-like, naive and happy character of his sunniest themes showed itself from the beginning....[but] as one of a harsh, manly and Beethovenian nature, however, [Brahms] favoured serious epic pathos. So in general the woman supported Schumann, the man supported Brahms.[143]

This is all strong stuff indeed, especially given the cataclysmic world events that would unfold just years later. While I'm inclined to agree with Daniel Beller-McKenna who points out that "supposing nationality as a predictive element for character and behaviour [did] not necessarily carry the extremely negative connotations we are

[143] Walter Niemann, *Die Musik*, 32, 43 and 277, in Beller-McKenna, "Brahms the German," 192, 193, and footnote 14 on page 208. Niederdeutsch or 'Low German,' according to Beller-McKenna, is used here to evoke "the supposed original Germanic tribe of Northwestern Germany on which some ultra-nationalist writers at the turn of the century pinned their belief in a pure blooded and culturally superior Teutonic past." Also see footnote 11 on page 207.

compelled to associate with such assumptions (particularly among Germans) following World War II," by 1947 there is a conspicuous absence of commentary on the topic of Brahms's German-ness - even from authors who had enthusiastically championed the idea just years before.[144] Indeed, in the years since we've rescued Brahms from the inconvenience of historical context by emphasizing his connection to the past and future, his popularity with Jews in the twilight of liberal Viennese classicism, or by adopting Schoenberg's 'Brahms the Progressive' rebranding: one that can be understood as Schoenberg's attempt to subvert the 'Brahms the Conservative' and 'Wagner the Progressive' labels, thus "reclaim[ing] an icon of the German cultural past from a conservative political outlook that had little resonance with the composer's own Liberal sensibilities."[145]

To deny however that Brahms's physical German-ness was discussed by contemporaneous observers as an essential component of his identity is to again claim him for a meta-historical narrative that protects our own notions of selfhood, while also severing an epistemological link to the language that informs aesthetic evaluations of Brahms performance practices today. In his discussion of the 'escapism' of recent scholarship on interwar music, where "the concept of purity...is anxiously sentimentalized and construed as benign," Taruskin asserts that, "to conceive of that history as mere style history is to engage in mythmaking and cosmetics."[146] Similarly,

---

[144] Beller-McKenna, "Brahms the German," 192, 203. Beller-McKenna points out that Karl Geiringer's 1934 biography of Brahms, originally entitled *Johannes Brahms, Leben und Schaffen eines Deutschen Meisters* [Johannes Brahms, Life and Work of a German Master], was later de-Teutonized in the 1936 English translation as *Brahms: His Life and Work*. Geiringer's discussion of Brahms as 'a guardian of German musical traditions' in the German 1934 edition was also omitted in the 1936 English version.
[145] Beller-McKenna, " Brahms the German," 188.
[146] Richard Taruskin, "Back to Whom?" 300.

Beller-McKenna observes that, “some of our own most common platitudes about Brahms’s music – universality, objectivity, timelessness – derive in part from an earlier, long-standing tradition of German cultural chauvinism and, by extension, nationalism.”[147]

While it is fairly uncommon to hear critics explicitly referring to modern Brahms performances as 'German,' behind closed doors performers often use the term to describe an approach that is physically imposing, dourly sober, emotionally limited, unflinchingly square, and fanatically pure and conservative: a construction of German-ness in music that indeed seems to have been filtered through a post-WWII lens. Unbeknownst to many performers however, many of the more widely applied aesthetic categories of Brahmsian corporeal control (modesty, power, stamina, athleticism, outdoorsy-ness, vitality, health, masculinity) were fundamentally implicated in late-Romantic discussions of the composer's racial heritage.

In the future it could be fruitful to explore how German-ness might have sounded to the likes of free-thinking turn-of-the-century Viennese liberals such as Brahms and Kalbeck: men for whom the concept may actually have been translated into musical acts closer to the 'deeply inward, impetuously fantastic, charming, smoothly folk-like, sunnily naive and feminine' spirit evidenced by Niemann's description of Schumann's music - and by the recordings of Brahms and his female pupils, for that matter.

> Mr. Lupu's...playing was properly **German** in its **sobriety** and formal **rigor**, but leavened with a poetic grace that, if you subscribe to national stereotypes, perhaps derives from his Romance heritage.[148]

---

[147] Beller-McKenna, "Brahms the German," 206.
[148] Rockwell, "German Bill," review of Radu Lupu (piano), in *New York Times Music Review* (January 29, 1991).

> I was left thinking: "What's **German**?" Against the landmark Otto Klemperer-Philharmonia recording, live performances I have heard with Herbert Bloomstedt, Helmuth Rilling, and many others [are] all characterized by a **brisk**, **straightforward**, **unsentimental**, and, well "**German**," approach.[149]

> At the opposite end of the spectrum, music as **Teutonic** and **severe** as Brahms'... can be tricky to bring to life, tending as it often does toward **squareness**.[150]

Aside from issues of race, there is also an absence of references to illness, disability and 'lateness' in contemporary dissections of Brahms's life and output. According to Joseph N. Straus, a composer's 'late style' can include elements of nostalgia, concision and authorial belatedness: themes that are indeed explored at length in Brahms scholarship, and usually to underline his superior mental fitness. However if Straus is right that late style works also represent "impaired bodies or minds and their failure to function in a normal way,"[151] then perhaps it is no wonder that such themes are notably absent with respect to a composer whose canonic identity seems deliberately constructed to repel questions of illness and disability. Indeed, in their comprehensive survey of publications on the subject of composers and illness, Saffle and Saffle note that every

---

[149] Janos Gereben, "San Francisco Symphony's Un-Teutonic *German Requiem,"* review of the San Francisco Symphony, in *San Francisco Classical Voice* (November 17, 2011), accessed February 7, 2013, http://www.sfcv.org/reviews/san-francisco-symphony/san-francisco-symphonys-un-teutonic-german-requiem.

[150] Evan Mitchell, "A Romantic Night Out: Dvořák, Tchaikovsky and Brahms at the Dallas Symphony," *Bachtrack* (January 15, 2013), accessed February 7, 2013, http://www.bachtrack.com/review-dallas-symphony-gonzalez-benedetti.

[151] Joseph N. Straus, "Disability and 'Late Style' in Music," *The Journal of Musicology* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 12, accessed December 15, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jm.2008.25.1.3.

single author discusses Mozart and Beethoven, while only one discusses Brahms.[152] We will return to this notion of 'lateness' in the next chapter as related to alternate readings of the biographical and metaphorical contexts of Brahms's 'late' piano works beyond narratives designed to buttress understandings of his mental and physical control.

Indeed, just as Robert Schumann implied that Brahms sprung fully-armed like Minerva into the German musical consciousness, so too are we to believe that he exits with his mind and body firmly intact: a theme reinforced throughout nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century discussions of his classicism and genius. Goethe's phrase "the classic is the hale man, the romantic the sick man"[153] is found throughout such accounts - often with the explicit implication that Brahms's genius was a symptom of his superior physical health and *vice versa*. In the following excerpt Rogers summarizes many of the themes already explored in this section, while hinting perhaps at the rarity of Brahms's *mens sana in corpore sano* in late-Romantic musical circles:

> In Brahms, however, we have a being who wholly refutes the theory that genius is allied to disease...At twenty it was remarked that 'his constitution was thoroughly sound; the most strenuous exertion scarcely fatigued him, and he could go soundly to sleep at any hour of the day he pleased.' Hegar described him at thirty-two as in 'extraordinarily sound health'...Henschel went swimming with him and admired his burly, well-knit, muscular body, 'the very image of strength and vigour.' He resembled Beethoven in his passionate fondness for the out-of-doors and in his pedestrian excursions into the country. At sixty he took long tramps in the Alps...'with head thrown back'...He was prepared at

[152] Michael Saffle and Jeffrey R. Saffle, "Medical Histories of Prominent Composers: Recent Research and Discoveries," *Acta Musicologica* 65, no. 2 (July - December, 1993): 82, accessed December 15, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/932980. The lone survey mentioning Brahms is A. Neumayr's *Musik und Medizin: Am Beispiel der deutschen Romantiker* (Wien: J & V Edition, 1989).

[153] Goethe, quoted in P. E. Vernon, "The Personality of the Composer," *Music & Letters* 11, no. 1 (January, 1930): 42, accessed December 14, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/726846.

> all times to do ample justice to good cookery, and good wine and beer...'but he was, at no period of his life, a glutton or a wine-bibber...Brahms' [sic] music may be 'muddy' (or was the critic who invented this phrase muddy?), but it is never sickly or weak. *He knocks into the proverbial cocked hat the idea that genius inhabits an unsound brain and crazy body*.[154]

If Brahms's supporters felt that Romanticism in music was symptomatic of an impaired or abnormal body, then it is no surprise that his opponents invoked the language of disease and death in their polemical attacks on his compositional style. Hugo Wolf once criticized Brahms's *Piano Concerto in D Minor* Op. 15 in 1884 "for the risk that its low temperature posed to the audience's health": "Through [it] there blows a draft so icy, so damp and cold, so foggy, that one's heart freezes, one's breath is taken away; one could get the sniffles from it. Unhealthy stuff.'"[155] In 1898, the great Wagnerian conductor Felix Weingartner observes: "I can admire [Brahms's] work, the construction, but...I feel the same powerless frigidity that doctor would feel in making himself try to put life back into the dissected corpse."[156] As a consequence of his deep Brahmsian connections perhaps, Hans von Bülow's pianism receives similar criticism:

> The corpse is carefully dissected, the organism's most subtle details are traced, the viscera studied with the fervour of a haruspex, and the course in anatomy is under way...always presenting us with nothing but the note-skeleton and concerning himself above all with the artful relationship of the musical organism's big and little bones, he turns every work of art into a dance of death... Bülow's technical equipment is, indeed,

---

[154] Rogers, "The Health of Musicians," 619 - 20. Emphasis is mine.
[155] Hugo Wolf, 30 November 1884, in *Hugo Wolfs Kritiken im Wiener Salonblatt*, ed. Leopold Spitzer and Isabella Sommer, 2 vols. (Vienna, 2002), i, 65, in Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 289.
[156] Felix Weingartner, trans. Maude Barrows Dutton, *The Symphony Since Beethoven* (Boston, MA, 1904), 60 - 61, 58, translation adapted in Ibid., 291.

> astounding, as is its unfailing reliability...But when it comes to breathing life and soul into the corpse, he lacks the necessary serum. He is merely a skilled surgeon.[157]

Naturally such accounts only served to further distance Brahms from the practices of his less hale contemporaries, while giving rise to many of the pervasive aesthetic categories that continue to pre-structure performances of Brahms's music today. Indeed, Wolf's attack on Bülow's careful delineation of local complexities or the 'organs' of works, his elucidation of their overall structure or 'skeleton,' and his emotionally detached surgical precision might as well be entitled, 'These are the qualities Brahms most prefers in a pianist.'

Roger Moseley expands this surgical trope to Brahms's extensive revision of his *Trio in B* Op. 8 and his friendship with surgeon Theodor Billroth. Moseley argues that just as Billroth pioneered the removal of carcinomas, so too does Brahms rid the early version of his Op. 8 of the notational corruptions of his association with Robert Schumann and their shared fascination with E. T. A. Hoffman's Kapellmeister Kreisler: elements such as the trio's extra-musical pastoral, archaic and heroic topoi; its departures from the strictures of sonata form; and its "capricious shifting of meters and textures…suggest[ing] the allusive and episodic nature of a recounted story."[158] Through his editorial practices, Brahms thus "restitch[es] Op. 8's corpus into the unassailable work of a hale and hearty Brahms rather than the unhealthy outpourings of a lovesick Kreisler Junior."[159]

---

[157] Wolf, February 6, 1887, in *Hugo Wolfs Kritiken*, i, 188, in Ibid., 290.
[158] Jonathan Bellman, "*Aus alten Märchen*: The Chivalric Style of Schumann and Brahms," *Journal of Musicology*, 13 (1995): 117 - 35, in Ibid., 263.
[159] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 293 - 94.

Moseley astutely asserts that Brahms's revisionist practices were catalysed by the intense dialectical and critical pressures he encountered once leaving the safety of Schumann's inner circle. In 1862 for example, critic Adolf Schubring scathingly points out Op. 8's eccentricities of form, remarking: "The whole thing disintegrates into a frenzied rout…Here passion and character celebrate their triumph, while beauty covers her face in sorrow."[160] While Moseley is right that Brahms later excised the notational corruptions of his youthful style in favour of clarity, succinctness, organic integrity and the primacy of sonata form; it is my contention that those corruptions seemed to represent something far more dangerous: namely, Schumann's syphilitically diseased mind and body, and each man's musico-psychological fixation with the madcap character of Kreisler in Hoffman's *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier* and *Kater Murr*.

Indeed, the dialectical metanarrative of Brahms's evolution from lovesick Romantic to hale and hearty Classic, and its lurking Procrustean subtext of mind-body control, would never have been possible had he not distanced himself from these youthful intersections of madness and disease. In fact it is no wonder why Brahms's contemporaneous supporters worked so tirelessly to underline his psychological and physical fitness as compared to his more overtly Romantic counterparts: as Eric Sams observes, "if Schumann had syphilis, then Schumann's was not the only music, nor the only happiness, nor the only reputation, nor the only physical and mental health, to be thereby affected."[161]

---

[160] Adolf Schubring, "Schumanniana Nr. 8: Die Schumann'sche Schule, IV: Johannes Brahms," *NZfM* 14 (1862): 109 - 10, trans. Frisch, "Five Early Works by Brahms," 116 - 17, in Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 270.

[161] Eric Sams, "Schumann's Hand Injury," *The Musical Times* 112, no. 1546 (December, 1971): 1159, accessed December 15, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/954772.

Brahms seems to have identified with Hoffman's wildly romantic, idealistic and restless character Kapellmeister Kreisler before meeting Schumann in September 1853, as he signed a number of works composed between 1852 - 53 as 'Joh. Kreisler jun.,' 'Jean de Krösel le jeune,' or some other combination thereof. He is also known to have kept a collection of literary quotes whimsically titled, 'Young Kreisler's Little Treasure Chest.' Soon after being taken into Schumann's coterie however, Brahms began to emulate his mentor's psycho-musical fixation with Florestan and Eusebius, by designating pieces in his *Variations* Op. 9 with a 'Kr.' or a 'B,' just as Schumann had labelled pieces either 'Florestan' or 'Eusebius' in his *Davidsbündlertänze* Op. 6.[162] The autograph of Brahms's *Trio in B,* Op. 8 (1853-4) is the last to bear the pseudonym; and while Joachim and Grimm refer to Brahms as 'Kreisler' in letters up until November 1854, after that the name vanishes from all correspondence between members of the Brahms circle.[163]

Many fascinating intersections between Hoffman's Kreisler tales and Brahms's early version of the *Trio* Op. 8 have recently been explored at length: particularly those that reinforce the metanarrative of Brahms's external evolution away from the notational corruptions of his poetic youth, toward the clear-eyed coherence of his mature style. In *Kater Murr* for example, the story of Kreisler's life is recounted while interspersed with reminiscences of a tomcat: a fragmented narrative style that may have informed that capricious, shifting, allusive and episodic quality in the early version of Op. 8. In *Callots Manier*, themes of dual personalities may have resonated with Brahms's duelling poetic and formalist urges, as he writes to Clara in 1854: "I often quarrel with myself – that is, Kreisler and Brahms quarrel with one another. But usually each has his decided opinion

[162] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 260.
[163] Siegfried Kross, "Brahms and E. T. A. Hoffman," *19th-Century Music* 5, no. 3 (Spring, 1982): 194, accessed December 15, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/746459.

and fights it out. This time...both were quite confused, neither knew what he wanted."[164] Kreisler seems similarly torn in *Callots*:

> I so assiduously searched out at the piano melodies and chords, which often had much expression and coherence. But I often wanted to weep bitterly…for whenever I touched the keyboard...unknown songs that I had never heard before flowed through my soul, and they seemed to me not my father's song, but rather those songs which sounded around me like ghostly voices.[165]

While Siegfried Kross traces the parallels between Brahms and Kreisler's artistic-psychological trajectory from poeticism to coherence, like Moseley he focuses upon the notational categories of that metanarrative while ignoring its deeper metaphorical implications. In *Kater Murr* for example, Hoffman describes Kreisler as someone who "had the fixed notion that insanity was lurking near him, like a wild beast thirsting for its prey, and that it would sometime suddenly tear him to pieces."[166] As Kreisler later grows more satisfied with his artistic work, "its fragmentary, 'bizarre' character disappears"; and when he sees his image reflected in water he observes "a calm, thoughtful man who, no longer buzzing wildly around in vague, endless spaces, holds firmly to the established path."[167] Though Hoffman asserts that the artist only appears 'mad' to normal society, he - tongue firmly in cheek - urges the public to rise up against artists by invoking the language of mental health:

---

[164] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, I, 9, trans. Avins, *BLL*, 51, in Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 259.
[165] E. T. A. Hoffman, "Johannes Kreislers Lehrbrief," *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, v. 4, *Kreisleriana*, no. 7), *Werke* (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1967), I, 274, in Kross, "Brahms," 196.
[166] Hoffman, *Kater Murr*, 114, 133, in Ibid., 197.
[167] Hoffman, *Kater Murr*, 233, 216, in Ibid., 199.

> Poets and musicians are joined in a very dangerous pact against the public. They intend nothing less than to drive spectators out of the real world, where they feel really comfortable, and…to torment them with all possible emotions and passions highly dangerous to their health.[168]

In my opinion, what Brahms really risked by maintaining his early musico-psychological fixation with Kreisler was being implicated in the trope of Romantic insanity. Just as Rogers asserted that 'idleness and introspection were ruinous to health,' whilst under the spell of the fantastically brooding reveries of their early poeticism, Brahms and Kreisler experience the ceaseless sounds of 'ghostly voices'; a state of 'endless buzzing wildly around in vague, endless spaces'; a 'fixed notion of insanity'; and they find themselves psychologically fragmented and confused. As they move towards controlled coherence in their respective artistic practices, each escapes the comorbidity of insanity and Romanticism as represented by Berlioz, and the added threat of corporeal disintegration should one's mental affliction go unresolved, as exemplified by Schumann.

Like the autobiographical intersections between Berlioz's monomaniacal 'distracted condition of the mind' and those of his protagonist in the *Symphonie Fantastique*, the 'ghostly voices' and 'lurking insanity' experienced by Kreisler are remarkably similar to the ceaseless aural hallucinations Schumann suffered as a result of his poisoned syphilitic body. According to Eric Sams, Schumann suffered from a complex array of psycho-physical impairments including: "continuous general malaise, tinnitus, vertigo, insomnia, headache, depression, premonitions of insanity, numbness, cramp, difficulty in writing, speech disturbance, memory failure, stroke, pains in bones and joints, florid psychosis, general paralysis of the insane, and deterioration to death." It

[168] Hoffman, *Werke*, I, 276, in Ibid., 198.

seems however, that many of Schumann's physical symptoms were probably more attributable to mercury poisoning than to syphilis itself, as the chemical was a common treatment at the time.[169]

German composers of the nineteenth-century were not unfamiliar with the causes, symptoms and consequences of syphilitic infection: 1820s Vienna had a reputation for being positively rife with the disease, and both Schumann and Hugo Wolf seem to have contracted it there around 1828. Like Schumann, Wolf is also reported to have experienced symptoms such as aural hallucinations and insanity before attempting a drowning suicide of his own.[170] Indeed, syphilis as a disease of the mind and body was a palpable cause for concern in nineteenth-century musical circles: not just because Germany's cities were teeming with it, but because the theme of syphilis intersects with a number of those already explored in this chapter, many of which have a bodily facet.

Joseph Straus maps the concept of resolution in tonal music to yet another 'master narrative' whereby the musical work undergoes "a dramatic trajectory [as it] moves through a state of threatened disability to a state of health restored."[171] Straus cites Edward Cone, who examines what he calls 'promissory notes' in Schubert's music: notes whose indicated resolution is in some way thwarted. Cone argues that in Schubert's *Moment Musical in A flat Major* Op. 94, no. 6, the failure of an E♮ to resolve to an F, though at first barely noticeable, catalyses a sequence of increasingly unsettling harmonic moves, including the tonicization of E Major: an element that frequently returns, and ultimately takes control of the unfolding work. Even when this foreign body seems to be

[169] Sams, "Schumann," 1157 - 58.
[170] Ibid., 1158.
[171] Joseph Straus, "Normalizing the Abnormal: Disability in Music and Music Theory," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 149, accessed January 7, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jams.2006.59.1.113.

tamed, "it bursts out with even greater force, revealing itself as basically inimical to its surroundings, which it proceeds to demolish."[172]

Cone relates this dramatization of Schubert's promissory note to "the effect of vice on a sensitive personality, and, more specifically, to Schubert's experience of syphilis, including its disabling psychological and physical effects."[173] Here, Cone seems to be referring to 'vice' and 'sensitive personalities' in terms of the taboo elements of 'non-normative' practices such as homosexuality, promiscuity, lack of personal hygiene, lack of self-control, obsession and addiction: stigmas that continue to be wrongly associated with sexually-transmitted diseases. Straus asserts that in Schubert's historical context, the debilitating psychological and physical impairments of syphilis would have endowed him with a culturally stigmatized, non-normative body.[174]

Straus and Cone astutely make the connection between a non-normative body and a musical work: just as Schubert's syphilis was contracted through sexual contact, whereby 'alien substances' or 'poisons' entered the composer's body; so too can Schubert's promissory notes be seen as foreign intruders into the body of the *Moment musical*. [175] Like Schubert's promissory note which seems at first to be unimportant but later takes on a dramatic and ultimately destructive role, so too was Schubert's syphilis treated for a time, while remaining ultimately incurable. The devastating psychological and physical effects of such an incurable and stigmatized disease leads Straus to assert

---

[172] Edward T. Cone, "Schubert's Promissory Note: An Exercise in Musical Hermeneutics," *19th-Century Music* 5 (1982): 233 - 41, in Straus, "Normalizing," 150.
[173] Cone, "Schubert," 240, in Ibid., 151.
[174] Straus, "Normalizing," note 98, 153.
[175] Eric Sams, "Schubert's Illness Re-Examined," *Musical Times* 121, no. 1643 (January 1980): 17, in Ibid., 173.

that in Schubert's music one hears "a recurring tale of exploration, banishment, exile, and eventual homecoming."[176]

Drawing upon Straus's definition of a master narrative in tonal music whereby a musical body is engaged in a dramatic trajectory from a state of threatened disability to one of restored health, perhaps Schumann can be seen as the promissory note in Brahms's evolving canonic body. As Schumann's syphilis was both degenerative and incurable, the resolution of Brahms's promissory note was blocked, causing his mentor's culturally-stigmatized and non-normative body to unravel to ultimately destructive and tragic consequences. Schumann's poetic Romanticism, his vivid musico-literary fixation on the characters of Eusebius and Florestan, and his contraction of a sexually-transmitted disease also evoke Cone's discussion of the effect of vice on 'sensitive personalities,' and Esquirol's definition of those most at risk for developing monomania: 'persons endowed with a brilliant, warm and vivid imagination; minds of a meditative and exclusive cast.'

Through the dialectical writings of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century observers, Brahms's more controlled mind and body rescues him from the dangers of Schumann's poisons. As a result, the metanarrative of his transition from the threatened disability of his early lovesick Romanticism to the restored health of his hale and hearty later Classicism is successfully resolved. As Walker observes: "When Schumann broods, he is only too often inclined to wander: when Brahms strikes a more or less similar vein of thought…he is sternly concise in design. He always saw straight from start to finish [and] was never led away by side issues."[177] As we will see however, this metanarrative

---

[176] Fisk, "Returning Cycles: Contexts for the Interpretation of Schubert's Impromptus and Last Sonatas," *California Studies in 19th Century Music* 11 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001): 267, 278 - 80, in Ibid., 174.
[177] Walker, "Brahms," 11.

does not satisfactorily demonstrate Brahms's internal resolution of his earlier Schumannian-Kreislerian tendencies, nor or does it account for issues of performance. Indeed, few pianists of the Schumann-Brahms circle 'played' Brahmsian structure in the ways we've come to expect, even when faced with the cool logic of Brahms's more structurally coherent later works.

Only a handful of contemporaneous commentators ever explicitly reference their desire to purge Schumann from Brahms's canonic body, preferring instead to focus their dialectical energies on the musical practices of the New Germans. While Deiters asserts that some of Brahms's later works "indicate a temporary relapse into the intense subjectivity"[178] of his early Schumannism; Harding remarks that, "these dreadful tendencies were eventually controlled by the chastening influence of [Brahms's] massive intellect."[179] A Mr. Langley seems in wholehearted agreement when he states that, "the greatest mistake made about Brahms is that he is ever held up as a follower of Schumann," and "let me say how thoroughly pleased I was to hear Dr. Harding dissociate Brahms from the name of Schumann."[180]

[178] Deiters, "Johannes Brahms," 11.
[179] Harding, "Some Thoughts,"167.
[180] Walker, "Brahms,"130, 170.

1.4) Coda

Pianists who innately understand what it means when someone describes their performances as 'a little too much Schumann and not enough Brahms' are the inheritors of powerful ideas about Brahms's relativist canonic identity: an identity protected by a pervasive aesthetic ideology of mind-body control and reinforced by contemporary Brahms performance norms: mores to which pianists adhere both for ethical reasons and because of our 'tendency to use art to recuperate stable and reassuring ideas of selfhood.' It is important to challenge these ideas however, because what we think about composers affects how we wish to hear their works performed. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson has shown how the Schubert recordings of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau "shaped the things people thought and wrote about the composer, bringing to him a new seriousness and psychological depth that was not there…for earlier listeners"; and Jim Samson has argued that you can hear the differences between various nationalistic perceptions of Chopin (from French, German, Russian and English perspectives) in the early recordings of representative pianists from each country.[181]

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, modern understandings of Brahms's controlled mind lead to performances of his works that are described as intellectual, serious, profound, restrained, structural, stoic and spiritual; while his corporeal control is communicated by performances described as robust, solid, healthy, German, modest, masculine, athletic, robust, vital, vigorous and powerful. Despite assumptions of

[181] Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, "Recordings and Histories of Performance Style," *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook, Eric Clarke, Leech-Wilkinson and John Rink (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 246; Jim Samson, "Chopin, Fryderyk Franciszek," section 11: Reception, *Oxford Music Online*. (Oxford University Press, 2012), in Leech-Wilkinson, *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, 246.

historical validity, this conflation of biography and aesthetic evaluation often ignores the agenda-laden, polemical, and historically-situated nature of late-Romantic accounts of Brahms's life and work, resulting in an approach to performing Brahms's piano music that doesn't reflect his own early-recorded performance style and those of his pupils.

This sounding evidence instead seems to point to a performance ideology that is more informed by a madcap Kreisler figure than by some purified ideology of control. When listening to Brahms's 1889 cylinder recording of his *Hungarian Dance in G Minor* or his pupil Ilona Eibenschütz's 1903 recording of his *Ballade* Op. 118 no. 3, one struggles to hear the Brahms who was "no revolutionary, but rather was weighed down with the baggage of the entire spiritual musical feelings of three centuries; like a fortress, protected by a barricade of classical musical forms."[182] Instead, what I hear is the young 'Joh. Kreisler jun.' described in an 1854 letter between Grimm and Joachim:

> [Brahms] is pestering me and wants to go up the Grafenberg, where we want to lie in the woods by the light of the moon. He is chock-full of crazy notions - as the Artist-Genius of Düsseldorf, he has painted his apartment full of the most beautiful frescoes in the manner of Callot, i.e. all kinds of grotesque visages and Madonna faces - so that he may have worthy thoughts while doing his daily business.[183]

Eerily, Brahms himself predicted what would happen once he shed his early Schumann-Kreisler psycho-musical affinities. In a letter dated 1853 he laments:

> Did I not bear the name Kreisler, I would now have the weightiest of reasons to lose courage, to curse my love of art and my enthusiasm, and to withdraw as a hermit

[182] Max Graf, 'Brahms-Studie,' in *Wagner Probleme und andere Studien* (Vienna, 1900), 101, in Botstein, "Brahms and Painting," 154.
[183] Grimm, *Briefwechsel* v, in Avins, *BLL*, 42 - 43.

> (scribe?) into the solitude (of an office) and lose myself in silent contemplation (of the documents to be copied).[184]

Thus to truly "criticize the frame around the discipline, the mental enclosure that pre-structures and limits the field by restricting the questions that are asked," I propose a renunciation of the ideological baggage of control and a re-evaluation of the documentary and recorded historical evidence of Brahms's contexts. The wide gaps between the loci of ethics, evidence, and act that are currently the *status quo* in contemporary Brahms performance practices will only be elucidated when pianists confront how such ideologies continue to mediate the modes by which we evaluate historical traces, as "it is ideology, after all, that keeps us in our places."[185]

To continue this process of peeling back the layers of our fixation with Brahmsian mental and physical control, in the ensuing chapter we will explore the notion of 'lateness' as related to Brahms's piano works Op. 116 - 119 and the possibility that these miniatures reference bodily and mental states that are less reconcilable with understandings of Brahms's controlled anti-Romantic canonic identity. By re-examining documentary evidence of the historical, biographical and metaphorical contexts of Brahms's late piano works, particularly as found in the composer's collected correspondence, it is hoped that less resolved traces of Brahmsian identity may be unearthed, thereby catalysing a retelling of what a 'characteristic' performance of these works might be.

---

[184] Brahms, *Briefweschel*, v, in Avins, *BLL*, 12.
[185] Korsyn, "Brahms Research," 91, 101.

2) ‘The Lullabies of my Sorrows’: Brahms's Late Piano Works Op. 116 - 119.

At times even a simple telling phrase, even an indirect one, will do to kindle an interpretation.[186]

2.1) Introduction

On December 11, 1890 Brahms rather unceremoniously announced his plans for retirement to publisher, confidant and financial manager Fritz Simrock with a brief letter and a few pages of his *Second String Quintet in G Major* Op. 111, writing: “With that scrap of paper you can take your farewell from my music – because quite literally, it is time to stop.”[187] That Brahms would make such a weighty pronouncement to someone with whom he was so close in the form of a letter (in which he also chastises Simrock for overpricing his scores), perhaps hints at the composer’s growing solitude towards the last seven years of his life. Just six months later Simrock received Brahms’s last will and testament, followed by an equally nonchalant request for the publisher to let Brahms know what he thought of the will, but that “if the business [was] not agreeable to…*quite simply* send it back.”[188] Simrock was blindsided.

Brahms would later return to composition, but the premature death of so many members of his inner circle around this time seems to have remained very much on his mind, perhaps prompting him to refer to the four sets of piano miniatures he completed in

---

[186] Lawrence Kramer, “Music, Metaphor and Metaphysics,” *The Musical Times* 145, no. 1888 (Autumn 2004): 9, accessed May 31, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4149019.
[187] Simrock, *Briefwechsel 11 - 12,* in Avins, *BLL*, 674.
[188] Simrock, *Briefwechsel 11 - 12,* in Ibid., 682. Emphasis is Brahms’s.

1892-3 as the “lullabies of my sorrows.”[189] Statements such as this have given rise to the general belief in scholarly and performance spheres that the late piano works Op. 116 - 119 are informed by deep melancholy: an impression only compounded by contemporaneous accounts of Brahms's uneventful and even hermitic lifestyle, many of which we have already examined in the previous chapter. While Brahms's supporters were eager to proclaim that he had little patience with the 'absurdities of hero worship,' his detractors saw his eschewal of the limelight as proof of his 'lack of charm, soul and personality.' Regardless of the particular agendas behind such accounts however, on the occasion of Brahms's death it is reported that, “the simple story of Brahms’s life, apart from his compositions, could be easily condensed into a paragraph.”[190] It is not difficult to see how narratives of personal loss and reclusiveness have coalesced into a metanarrative of profound sorrow where Brahms's late works are concerned.

As ever however, Brahms's control is understood to have saved him from hysterical outpourings of grief and the inner and outer torment of outright depression. Instead, this sadness is understood to have been quiet, reflective and resigned, and perhaps reminiscent of Richard Binns's observation that with Brahms one always sensed "something brooding, obscure, tremulous, as he meditates over man, nature and destiny."[191] In 1899 Ernest Walker delivered a paper to The Royal Musical Association in which he invokes the well-worn tropes of Brahmsian health and Classical lineage to bemoan the emergence of a certain misguided pessimism in the perception and performance of the composer’s late oeuvres:

---

[189] Avins, *BLL*, 693.
[190] “Johannes Brahms,” *TMTASCC* 38, no. 651 (May 1, 1897): 297, accessed May 26, 2012, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3366944.
[191] Binns, "Some Thoughts," 601.

> Some indeed have spoken of [Brahms's] attitude in this respect as implying pessimism: I should prefer to call it the acceptance of the facts of things, and certainly he is never for a single moment pessimistic in the sense of morbid - every note he wrote from the first to the last is healthy to the core. He never raves or shrieks: like his two great spiritual parents, Bach and Beethoven, he knows that there is such a thing as reticence in art. Not one of the three 'wears his heart upon his sleeve.'[192]

While Joseph Straus asserts that late styles often represent "impaired bodies or minds and their failure to function in a normal way,"[193] Brahms's canonic identity seems to have been specifically constructed to repel such narratives. Drawing on Straus's fascinating table of prevalent themes in scholarly discussions of musical lateness,[194] while themes such as concision, authorial belatedness, anachronism, alienation, reclusiveness, introversion, complexity, spirituality and even nostalgia are indeed common features of dissections of Brahms's late works and his life in general, they are generally used to reinforce understandings of his control.

Referring to qualities of anachronism in Brahms's late style for example, Straus points to the "sense of having outlived [his] era, of being old-fashioned, left behind by changes in musical style to which [he was] unable or unwilling to adapt"; while elsewhere he cites Margaret Notley who notes that lateness in Brahms is related to the twilight of Viennese liberalism. On the quality of nostalgia heard in the composer's late works, Straus asserts that, "Brahms...felt that his works were written in the shadow of Beethoven's achievement, and certainly a sense of anxious belatedness is bound up with

---

[192] Walker, “Brahms,” 128.
[193] Straus, "Disability and 'Late Style,'" 12.
[194] Ibid., 8 - 11.

the nostalgic, autumnal qualities so often noted in his music."[195] Roger Moseley also suggests that Brahms's scholarly study, synthesis and translation of past music anticipates our own fascination with historical performance and musicology, resulting in "the historical mode [with] which we listen to Brahms: his music is remembered rather than experienced afresh, and thus we identify our nostalgia with his."[196] If there are indeed autumnal, melancholic, alienated or nostalgic qualities to be found in Brahms's late piano music therefore, they are a consequence of his deference to the music of the past, his Classical lineage, his commitment to his principles, his historicism, his modesty and his cultured open-mindedness, and certainly not his experience of anything that cannot be reduced to or tamed by his mental and physical fitness.

While I agree that many of the above-mentioned signifiers of late style are indeed to be found in Brahms's late piano pieces Op. 116 - 119, as are moments of resigned sadness, it is difficult to believe that they are all merely a consequence of things like Beethoven's shadow for example, or that Brahms's experience of loss and loneliness was really so dispassionate. Furthermore, these enigmatic works also seem to contain moments of levity, joy, ambiguity, restlessness and even anger: qualities less easily reconciled with understandings of Brahms's canonic identity, and as such suppressed by the aesthetic ideology of control and its protective performance norms.

As opposed to the piano music of Lizst, Chopin and Schumann for example, where performers are encouraged to exercise their expressive and technical apparatuses in order to communicate and even impose what they perceive as emotional content, in

---

[195] Straus, "Disability and 'Late Style,'" 5. Straus refers here to Margaret Notley, *Lateness and Brahms: Music and Culture in the Twilight of Viennese Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[196] Moseley, "Is There Only Juan Brahms?" 167.

Brahms's music emotional content is understood to emerge unassisted when performers maintain a clear-eyed and deferent approach to expression, tone production, tempo, detail and structure in Brahms's music. In other words, if emotion is there at all it is somehow 'locked' inside the music. Unfortunately however, the extreme restraint so prized by contemporary Brahms style tends to soften the edges of those emotional qualities understood to be rooted in control, like nostalgia, alienation, stoicism, and resigned sadness, for example; while it neutralizes anything hinting at less controlled states of body and mind.

Later in this volume we will examine how the less controlled qualities of Brahms's late piano works can be heard to great advantage on the restless and impassioned recordings of the pianists in his inner circle. For now however, these qualities also seem to lurk between the lines of the composer's personal correspondence. In order to begin narrowing the gaps between contemporary Brahms performances and the experience of listening to the historical evidence both sonic and literary, perhaps a re-evaluation of what Brahms's late piano works *mean* or what they "tell of"[197] is in order; the hypothesis being that pianists with access to Brahms played his music differently both because it *meant* something different to them and because their understanding of how that meaning should sound was different as well.

What follows here therefore is a re-examination of the historical, biographical and metaphorical contexts of Brahms' late piano works: one based in large part on Styra Avins's brilliantly collected and edited English translation of the composer's letters, without which an English-based study such as this would be impossible. It is my belief that the 'simple telling phrases' contained in these letters illustrate that the emotional

[197] Kramer, "Music, Metaphor and Metaphysics," 6.

content pervading Brahms' late piano music may not be easily reconciled with modern understandings of his controlled canonic identity, but that once elucidated it may afford a dramatic rethink of the range of expressive and technical means used when performing his piano works Op. 116 - 119.

2.2) Early Loss

Long before sickness and death would grip most of those to whom Brahms would grow close later in life, the tragic death of Robert Schumann in 1856 and that of his mother Christiane nine years later were losses that may have precipitated his early inclination to see himself as a lonely outsider. Immediately after Robert had attempted suicide by jumping into the Rhine River on February 27, 1854, just weeks after Brahms had prophetically written to Clara, "How I long for spring to arrive, which I hope will bring us all together again on the Rhine,"[198] Brahms rushed to Düsseldorf to be at Clara's side. With the unfailing support of his close friends Otto Grimm, Albert Hermann Dietrich and Joseph Joachim, the twenty-one year old Brahms launched himself into assisting with the everyday practicalities of Clara's new reality: seven young children (with one on the way), the matter of Robert's treatment and institutionalization, and the running of the Schumann household while Clara continued to teach and concertize in order to support her large family.

As evidenced by Eugenie Schumann's account of the *Kinderszene* in which a young, blond and athletic Brahms is reported to have performed daring acrobatics for the gathered Schumann children, he not only aided in the family's finances, but took charge of the children's care, education and entertainment as well; providing them with a certain domestic stability and some much-needed distraction while Clara was abroad on tour. In spite of Brahms' valiant efforts to maintain a sense of order and normalcy however, correspondence from the time hints at the devastating impact of Robert's suicide attempt

[198] *Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe*, in Avins, *BLL*, 36.

on the Schumann household as a whole, as well as the attentive protectiveness with which everyone now observed its matriarch. In April 1854, Grimm reports to Joachim:

> Frau Schumann is as crushed as in the beginning; - often, when she speaks of [Robert], or after playing some of his things, she breaks into sobs. The only good thing is that she is now not importuned as frequently by personal or written expressions of sympathy.[199]

For all his friends' concern, it seems as though Brahms was every bit as terrified, despondent and confused in the weeks and months immediately following Robert's suicide attempt as Clara. The total mind-body disintegration and institutionalization of his greatest mentor and champion with whom he shared his early Kreisler affinities, his oft-documented infatuation with Clara, and the weightiness of his new (albeit self-imposed) familial responsibilities, all seem to have shaken young Johannes to the core. Though he continued to compose and teach whilst in Düsseldorf he would not publish a single work for nearly six years, leading friends and family to fret that he had become listless, distracted and melancholy.

It appears however that his parents' concern was rooted primarily in financial matters, as so often seems to have been the case. In June 1854 Brahms's mother wrote to him anxiously regarding his decision to go to Clara: "You cannot live by just composing…For the moment, you have done right to go there. But to stay there? That way you loose [sic] much time and money."[200] Brahms had however clearly been drawn to Düsseldorf for reasons beyond loyalty to his mentor. Later that same month, and in a letter asking Joachim if he should entitle a new set of works *Leaves from the Diary of a*

---

[199] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5,* in Ibid., 41.
[200] Stephenson, *Familie*, in Ibid., 37 - 38.

Musician Published by the Young Kreisler, Brahms describes how desperately "confused and indecisive" he feels, writing:

> I love and am in love with [Clara]. I often have to restrain myself forcibly just from quietly embracing her and even -: I don't know, it seems to me so natural, as though she could not take it at all amiss.[201]

It cannot be overstated how absolutely vital both Robert and Clara Schumann had been to the young composer's newfound critical and popular success. Brahms was, and remained, ever grateful for all they had done and risked bringing him into the elite musical circles in which they moved. Indeed, that he felt an intensely dutiful need to be at Clara's side during this difficult time is wholly understandable. And while much has been made of the romantic motivations for Brahms' speedy arrival and lengthy stay in Düsseldorf, there is no evidence that Clara ever gave Brahms any reason to believe that the void left by Robert's breakdown would be filled by either the young Brahms or anyone else for that matter. His belief that Clara would not reject his advances may have been nothing more than a combination of naïve youthful fantasy and macho display for Joachim's benefit; or it could evidence an early predilection for the inner and outer poetic tumult that so pervades E. T. A. Hoffman's tales. Indeed, Brahms's desperate indecisiveness and confusion here recalls Hoffman's description of the figure of Kreisler in *Kater Murr* as one who is "buzzing wildly around in vague, endless spaces."[202]

---

[201] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5, in* Ibid., 47 - 48. Avins notes that this passage was left out of the Brahms *Briefwechsel* (as were most direct references to the exact nature of Brahms and Clara's relationship), but she has restored it here from the autograph.
[202] Hoffman, *Kater Murr*, 216, in Kross, "Brahms," 199.

In any case, every member of the Schumann circle seemed certain of Robert's imminent recovery and eventual reinstatement as rightful head of the household. In letters to Joachim, Grimm and Clara at this time, even Brahms seems to revel in each miniscule sign from Robert's doctors of the patient's improving health, though it could be argued that this was either an attempt to conceal his true feelings toward Frau Schumann or to shed an optimistic spin on a hopelessly desperate situation, or both. In the same letter quoted just above, Brahms reports to Joachim: "[Robert] also asked in which direction Godesberg lay, and said that he had spent a summer there! Are those not marvellous signs of a returning memory?"[203] In August 1854, Brahms travels to Bonn to check on Herr Schumann's condition himself, later describing the encounter to Clara in a cautiously hopeful as well as painfully truthful tone:

> Your dear husband has not changed in the least, he has only gained a little weight. His glance is friendly and bright…his gait and his greeting were freer and firmer…hope, as I do, more and more firmly, for the complete, if slow, recovery of the cherished man…I also must not withhold from you that your husband has had auditory hallucinations these last days. Their recurrence from time to time won't be enough to unsettle you too much, will they?[204]

For all the trepidation and confusion surrounding Robert's hospitalization, the most striking feature of the correspondence that survives from this period is Brahms's ability to revel the joy, comfort and knowledge that sorrow can bring. His inclusion in

---

[203] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5,* in Ibid., 46. The Schumanns often vacationed together in the Rhenish castle-dotted mountains near Bad Godesberg.

[204] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, in Ibid., 55 - 56. From this letter it appears that at least on this occasion Brahms was unable to visit with Robert in private and one-on-one. Brahms was instead permitted to observe him drinking a cup of coffee and speaking with his doctors, though Brahms could not make out the nature of their discussion.

the Schumann household both before and after Robert's breakdown seems to have been an immense source both of domestic comfort and professional pride for the young Brahms. Once the initial shock of Robert's attempt on his own life had passed, life seems to have carried on for Brahms much as before: with long candlelit evenings of eating, drinking and music-making amongst friends; with the incessant teasing of Clara's rambunctious young children; with endless hours spent rummaging through the Schumann's extensive library of rare books and scores; all the while surrounded by the warmth the adulation of their wide circle of powerful friends.

In the years preceding Robert's death in July 1856, letters between Brahms, Clara, Joachim and Grimm are littered with references to moments of pure levity and bliss; usually in reference to intimate evenings of casual music-making at Clara's, or the many private jokes the group shared, or sporadic scraps of good news from Bonn regarding Robert's condition. In one such letter Brahms writes to Joachim: "[Clara] was dancing around the room for joy. I have never before seen her so cheerful, happy and calm."[205] In another, Brahms writes to Clara after he, Grimm and Joachim accompanied her on the Düsseldorf - Hanover leg of a concert tour: "I only left Hanover at Thursday noon; we spent a few more fine days there, J[oachim] and Gr[imm] lying on the sofa at dusk, and I playing in the next room."[206] And finally, in a letter to Grimm, Brahms writes:

> If only you had been here and had spent the glorious, jolly day with us…we think of you often, especially while making music, drinking, reading, and out walking, and what else do we do, anyway?[207]

---

[205] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5 - 6,* in Ibid., 49.
[206] *Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe,* in Ibid., 64.
[207] Grimm, *Briefwechsel 4,* in Ibid., 102.

Indeed, the Schumann's Düsseldorf home already seems to have become a potent and lasting source of nostalgia for Brahms; with its shifting echoes of light and shadow, domestic bliss and turmoil, infatuation and unrequited love, opportunity and tragedy, leisure and responsibility, comfort and regret. Furthermore, and perhaps just as importantly for issues of interpretation in performance, Brahms seems to have not only taken immense comfort in the sorrowful memories themselves, but he seemed to grasp their musical potential as well. As Brahms writes to Clara in August 1854, desperate at having briefly left her side to go on a walking tour of the Black Forest, "If the great longing which I have felt in these days has an effect on my playing, etc., I really ought soon to be able to work magic with it"[208]; while in January 1855 he writes to Joachim: "How dear to me are all the works which came into being this winter…they remind me so much of twilight hours at Clara's."[209] After Schumann's death came inevitable and more permanent upheavals in Brahms's domestic and professional arrangements, and while he would form many lasting friendships upon striking out on his own in Vienna, in April 1864 he laments:

> My real friends are the old friends; unfortunately, my heart can take pleasure in them more and more only in my imagination. There is no one here to replace any one of them.[210]

Later in the same letter however, Brahms mentions that he longs to return home "to Hamburg and sit in [his] old room for a few evenings"[211] in the company of his father

[208] *Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe*, in Ibid., 53.
[209] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5 - 6,* in Ibid., 83.
[210] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, in Ibid., 293 - 94.
[211] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, in Ibid., 294.

Johann Jakob, mother Christiane, and sister Elise. Ill-matched both in age and temperament,[212] Brahms's parents moved their young family around Hamburg several times while he was still a boy, and though they led a middle class lifestyle it seems that their financial standing was tenuous at best. By the age of fourteen, the young Brahms was already contributing to the household finances as a piano player in some of the more respectable social establishments of Hamburg's lower classes.[213] Nevertheless, Brahms's letters to his parents indicate that he was a loving and grateful son. In one of his earliest letters dated Christmas Eve 1846, his deep sense of filial duty is revealed when he writes:

> When I count all the good deeds and cares you have continuously heaped upon me[!], I do feel that I am still too weak to thank you sufficiently, but at least I will strive always to conduct myself so as to earn your love and to provide the joy of your old age.[214]

Nearly eighteen years later, as his thoughts turned to his old room in Hamburg and those irreplaceable 'old friends' whose company he could enjoy only in his imagination, Brahms continued to worry about the advancing age and ill-health of his mother Christiane. Sadly, he was altogether ill prepared for what he would find upon his return to Hamburg in 1864: namely, his family in utter ruins. To his dismay, Brahms discovered that Johann Jakob had brusquely thrown both his sister and mother out of the family home claiming, "he could no longer live with an aged wife and the ailing daughter he viewed as a malingerer."[215]

---

[212] Christiane was seventeen years Johann Jakob's senior and had always been sickly. While she was calm, modest and well respected, Johann had a reputation for being an ill-tempered spend thrift.
[213] Avins, *BLL*, 4.
[214] Kalbeck, *Brahms 4,* 534, in Ibid., 7.
[215] Avins, *BLL*, 298.

Though Brahms and his family exchanged letters regularly, at great length, and in lively detail throughout their lives, there is however a marked absence of direct references to the 1864 dissolution of the Hamburg home as Brahms had most of the letters pertaining to the matter burned at a later date. Still, there are sporadic and cryptic clues in Brahms's earlier letters that suggest something was indeed amiss, and that the reality of his familial situation differed greatly from the nostalgic images in the recesses of his memory. In 1854 he wrote to Clara while visiting his family in Hamburg:

> I can no longer find myself in my former life; I can no longer dwell four people in two rooms…I have become so accustomed to being alone that I have to ask my parents, etc., to leave me alone.

Shortly thereafter he again wrote to Clara: "Don't worry about my 'taking a trip to Hamburg'; I have continual foreboding which drives me on, you know what it is."[216]

While Brahms's attitude towards his old life in Hamburg seems to have been part nostalgia and part grumpy annoyance, his outlook would soon erupt into full-fledged concern upon learning of his father's ejection of his mother and siblings and his subsequent refusal to support them financially. In January 1865, Christiane penned a lengthy and heart-breaking letter detailing, among many other things, the true nature of her tumultuous relationship with Johann Jakob, who seems to have been a cruel man. According to Avins, this letter must have arrived at Brahms's door just days before he received news of Christiane's death.[217] Through this letter one begins to grasp just how

---

[216] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, in Ibid., 67, 99.
[217] Avins, *BLL,* 311.

difficult Brahms's family life in Hamburg must truly have been, making the nostalgia he later felt for that life all the more telling.

Ever the optimist and dutiful son however, Brahms not only began to support his family at this juncture - a commitment that took a heavy toll on his personal finances - but he began to act as mediator in the matter as well. Over the course of several letters he pleads with his father to assist with the relocation and living expenses incurred by his mother and sister. Judging from the pitiful condition in which Clara found them some months later however, Brahms's efforts seem to have been in vain.[218] Based on their letters, Brahms does seem to eventually forgive his father, and the two men even correspond warmly on the subject of Johann Jakob's later remarriage. While it is difficult to fully comprehend how the catastrophic impact of losing two family units in such quick succession might have affected Brahms, in a letter to Clara from Vienna in April 1872 he writes: "Holidays I always spend all alone, quite by myself, with a few dear ones up in my room, and very quietly - given that my own people are dead or far away."[219]

What does seem clear however, is that Brahms's persistent nostalgia for both the Schumann's household and that of his childhood was neither simple longing for the comfort of happier times, nor static sadness – nor was it both. Brahms's yearning for two domestic situations associated with devastating personal loss and disappointment suggests that his nostalgia was not a simple juxtaposition of joy and sadness. Nostalgia for Brahms, as Roger Moseley puts it, was the "fleeting beauty of a moment where past and present…confront each other with memories and with things forgotten before taking

[218] Ibid., 304.
[219] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, in Ibid., 439.

resigned leave of each other."[220] Indeed, still grieving the loss of his mother, in February 1865 Brahms writes to Clara: "Time changes everything for better or for worse, no, not changes, but shapes and unfolds."[221] Far from controlled, the shifting, fleeting, restless and unfolding nature of Brahms's early experience of nostalgia will become key to understanding how this emotional content might be communicated in performances of his late piano works.

[220] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 304.
[221] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, in Avins, *BLL*, 319.

2.3) Brahms the 'Poor Outsider'

Toward the end of the 1860s, and perhaps inspired by the opening lines of his *Alto Rhapsody* as excerpted from Goethe's *Harzreise im Winter*,[222] Brahms began referring to himself as a 'lonely outsider' after the poem's discontented wanderer who is fated to a life of solitude due to his inability to live peacefully in the world. In a February 1870 letter to Karl Reinthaler who had just conducted the first major public performance of Brahms's *German Requiem* with the Singakademie[223] Brahms lamented, "Ah, poor outsider that I am!"[224] Two years later, he betrays a certain complicity in his growing solitude, and writes to Clara:

> The turmoil in which one lives – I don't laugh at it, I don't join in the lies – but it is as if the best part of one could lock itself up, leaving merely half the person walking away in a dream.[225]

Apart from the loss of both Robert Schumann and his mother Christiane, one new reason for this gloomy outlook has already been discussed at length here: the intensely polarizing tone of the debate over both Brahms's place in German musical life as well as the nature of musical meaning and progress in general. Indeed, the polemics had begun many years earlier with the publication of Robert Schumann's laudatory 1853 "Neue

---

[222] The excerpt of Goethe's 1777 poem "Winter Journey in the Harz" used in Brahms's *Alto Rhapsody* Op. 53 reads, 'Aber abseits, wer ist's? In's Gebüsch verliert sich sein Pfad…' which is roughly translated as, 'But who is that standing apart? In the underbrush he loses his path.'
[223] Franz Gehring and Bernd Wiechert, "Karl Reinthaler," in *Oxford Music Online*, accessed May 31, 2012, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/23157.
[224] Reinthaler, *Briefwechsel 3,* in Avins, *BLL*, 406.
[225] From *Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe*, in Ibid., 439.

Bahnen" 1853 article, but they later intensified with a series of editorials published in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* by supporters of the Liszt circle in defence of the literary-oriented ideals of the New German School's 'Music of the Future.' The debate finally exploded into a full-scale turf war after Brahms's own manifesto of 1860 in which he attacked the ideals of the New Germans, asserting that music should progress according to its inner spirit and logic, and not by way of theatre or tone painting.[226]

However, the embarrassment and resounding ridicule Brahms suffered at the hands of Leipzig's artistic elite after the manifesto's bungled release,[227] his subsequent alienation from adherents of the New German School, and his recent personal losses including the death of his father in 1872, all seem to have been but sad backdrop for the composer's deepening feelings of loneliness and alienation. While some must have taken Brahms's repeated references to this solitude with a measure of doubt, as he was well known for the wide and varied circle of acquaintances with whom he kept in regular contact, those who knew him best knew that he could be incredibly awkward and gruff in his personal and professional dealings. Over the years, those forced to bear the brunt of his less congenial side only seemed to grow in number, thereby deepening his growing identification with Goethe's discontented wanderer.

In the years following Brahms's appointment as music director elect of Vienna's Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in 1871 (a widely coveted position that was recaptured in 1875 by his old rival Johann Franz von Herbeck), Brahms's "unyielding artistic

---

[226] George S. Bozarth and Walter Frisch, "Brahms, Johannes," in *Oxford Music Online*, accessed May 31, 2012, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51879pg2.

[227] While Brahms's 1860 manifesto was being circulated amongst other eminent musicians, it was leaked to the press before many could attach their signatures. The document subsequently went to print bearing only the names of Brahms, Joseph Joachim and two others. Brahms was mortified.

incorruptibility and independence"[228] added fuel not only to his rising fame as a conductor-composer-pianist, but to the polemics over the future of music and his many fiery feuds as well. While we have seen how Brahms's dogged commitment to his ideals was framed as evidence of his deep mental control in public spheres, there is evidence that many of these skirmishes unravelled to less dignified ends in private. In early April 1875, Brahms discussed recent developments at the Gesellschaft in a letter to his dear friend Hermann Levi: a German conductor whom he had met through Clara:

> Of course it can all be said in one word: Herbeck! Nothing has happened but the prospects are not pleasing and so I prefer to go. I do not wish either to quarrel with him nor wait until he has got rid of me. To relate details in writing is too long-winded and boring for me. But perhaps it could be done in person…[229]

Sadly, a letter only weeks later hints that whatever transpired in that meeting between Brahms and Levi irreparably damaged their relationship forever. As Levi writes to Brahms:

> I would consider it a misfortune if I confronted as stranger and foe the material which, as an opera director, I am expected to replicate and represent. One who is staunchly self-reliant, like you…need not deal with the external world and can avoid everything which is disagreeable to his nature, is free to go his way, untouched by his own time – and to rise above it…For me there was initially the satisfaction which the conductor derives from having overcome the technical difficulties, then the genuine interest of a theatre person…To my mind this has nothing at all to do with 'transformations'…The fact that I shy away from any conceivable association with the future gang, and am thoroughly

[228] Avins, *BLL*, 420.
[229] Levi, *Briefwechsel 7,* in Ibid., 473.

> hated by it, might also give you cause to ponder whether I had actually deserved – your really cruel words.[230]

Though Levi had always been a champion of Brahms's music, he had developed a passion for opera, and especially that of Richard Wagner. While it is hardly surprising that an opera-loving conductor might take an interest in Wagner's music, opposing factions in the debate over the future of German music had long pitted Brahms and the operatic juggernaut against one another, leading many in Brahms's camp to interpret Levi's new passion as traitorous. And while Brahms never publicly expressed anything but admiration of Wagner's music, the respect was most certainly not mutual. Wagner would go on to write at length about Brahms and his music with both nastiness and contempt.[231]

Nevertheless, Hermann Levi and Wagner met in 1871, and the former was "won over as much by Wagner's music as by his artistic message, even defending the aesthetic underlying *Das Judenthum in der Musik,*"[232] in which Wagner attacked Jewish composers Giacomo Meyerbeer and Felix Mendelssohn. Levi's defence of the paper is notable given that he was Jewish but not completely out of the ordinary, as Wagner enjoyed (and profited from) the support of many eminent Jewish artists. I'm inclined to agree with Laurence Dreyfus's assertion that modern discussions of the Jewish response to nineteenth century German anti-Semitism are oversimplified and tend to gloss over the

---

[230] Levi, *Briefwechsel 7,* in Ibid., 473 - 74.
[231] Ibid., 370. It is entirely possible that Brahms exercised the same caution with regards to his opinions on Wagner as he did with his relationship with Clara or the dissolution of his family, thereby destroying and incriminating letters. Whatever he missed may also have been either destroyed by friends, or omitted by early biographers and compilers of his correspondence.
[232] Laurence Dreyfus, "Hermann Levi," in *Oxford Music Online*, accessed May 31, 2012, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16515.

fact that like Levi, many of the best and brightest Jewish artists of the time sought acceptance and success within the elite national culture that Wagner represented.[233] Indeed, Hermann Levi went on to become one of the leading Wagnerian interpreters of the 1870s and 80s, in spite of simmering religio-racial tensions between the two men and the undoubtedly numerous difficulties he faced as a Jew in German high art circles.

Just because Levi knew what he was doing however, doesn't mean Brahms did as well. It isn't hard to imagine that Brahms's 'cruel words' pertained to what he may have perceived as Levi's foolish association with a well-known anti-Semite, and his conversion or 'transformation' to Wagnerism - though there's little evidence to support such a theory. While Dreyfus astutely argues that even "people like Brahms…never suggested that Levi was in danger of cavorting with a dangerous anti-Semite,"[234] it is possible that Brahms indeed voiced this very concern, either at that fateful meeting or on some other occasion. Indeed, perhaps Levi felt the need to bring up how 'thoroughly hated' he was by the Wagnerians because the topic had already been discussed between these two old friends.

Other possible explanations for the eventual dissolution of Levi and Brahms's friendship include Eugenie Schumann's report that Brahms was incensed over Levi's firing of a butler suspected of stealing cigars, and Brahms's professional jealousy over Levi's infatuation with Wagner's music. Though much more plausible, this latter theory is even less supported by the surviving evidence. Besides, Clara and Levi's friendship thrived despite the fact that she was much more virulently opposed to Wagner than

---

[233] Laurence Dreyfus, "Hermann Levi's Shame and Parsifal's Guilt: A Critique of Essentialism in Biography and Criticism," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 6, no. 2 (1994): 132, accessed June 24, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/823821.
[234] Ibid., 135

Brahms is ever reported to have been.[235] Whatever the precise catalyst for this falling out may have been however, it is likely that Brahms and Levi had been experiencing a rift not evidenced by their correspondence, and that the arguments of that fateful meeting were the final straw in a long-standing opposition of musical tastes and allegiances.[236]

More importantly however, this incident suggests that Brahms's feelings of alienation and solitude were not merely a consequence of some heroic intellectual pig-headedness, like Hermann Deiters's 1888 polemical assertion of his "enthusiasm for the true aims of art" thereby "keep[ing] it from utter degeneracy,"[237] for example. Brahms's 'cruel words' to Levi were clearly meant to hurt, and as a result of this growing prickliness his coterie of dedicated allies was indeed dwindling in numbers. Indeed, despite some perfunctory communication between the two men afterward, their relationship would never recover. In March 1876 a mutual Düsseldorf friend of Levi and Brahms's, the engraver Julius Allgeyer, even pleads with Brahms to reconcile with his old friend, writing: "It almost appears that you, 'outsider,' want to push through the undergrowth alone."[238] Apparently Brahms was not alone in his fear of losing valuable allies because of his ill-tempered ways. In any case, it seems that any discussion of the qualities of alienation and solitude in Brahms's music should necessarily include the less controlled emotional states of anger, callousness and irritability.

Brahms's letters evidence that he was keenly aware of his propensity for such antisocial behaviour. In June 1871 he wrote to the singer Ottilie Ebner, "I may already

---

[235] Avins, *BLL*, 474 - 75.
[236] Ibid., 791. After accepting a post as conductor in Munich in 1872, Hermann Levi became embroiled in a feud with another of Brahms's dearest friends, Franz Wüllner. It is possible that this latest squabble only added to a growing feeling of conflicting personal and professional loyalties between Brahms and Levi.
[237] Deiters, "Johannes Brahms," 11.
[238] Orel, *Brahms & Allgeyer*, in Avins, *BLL*, 489.

have lost what scant reputation I had as a 'kind and obliging person.'"[239] Sadly, this gaucheness almost led to the dissolution of his friendships with Clara and Joachim as well. The whole row began when Brahms was invited to both compose a new work and deliver a prologue for a music festival in Bonn memorializing Robert Schumann, with Joachim as music director and conductor. While some might point to the tropes of Brahms's modesty and hyperawareness of his place in history as a possible reason for his refusal of the invitation,[240] it is far more likely that the timeframe under which he was expected to produce a new work was simply too constrained, and that the memory of Robert's tragic passing was still too fresh in his mind. In January 1873, Brahms politely declined to the festival's organizer, Friedrich Heimsoeth, stating:

> I see no possibility of participating in your celebration in the desired spirit. My reasons are so profoundly my concern alone that I would like to state …[that] if I were now to write a piece expressly for that day, the same qualms would return more powerfully, be my business, and deter me…I will probably never be allowed to love a better person – and will also, I hope, never witness the progress of such a dreadful fate from such ghastly proximity.

In that same letter, Brahms goes on to insinuate that he might agree to a performance of his *Requiem,* as it is "a text which could let [him] forget [his] scruples,"[241] but strangely Brahms received no reply from Heimsoeth. Brahms, perhaps offended by the festival organizer's silence, urged Joachim to adopt a few of his less

---

[239] Von Balassa, *Brahmsfreundin*, in Ibid., 426.
[240] On the occasion of the unveiling of the memorial monument seven years later, the funds for which were raised by the Bonn festival, Brahms wrote to Clara that, "it's an all too peculiar idea that a great musician should have his praises sung by a lesser one." *Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe*, in Avins, *BLL*, 452.
[241] Heimsoeth, *Briefwechsel 3,* in Ibid., 450.

desirable traits, writing jokingly: "Be careful in dealing with your committee and according to circumstance be rude, at any rate obstinate; by that method I have managed to get through the winter quite well."[242] Joachim and Clara however took personal issue both with Brahms's hesitation to contribute to the festival, and his undiplomatic and lackadaisical approach to having the matter resolved as well.

By the summer of 1873 Brahms was surprised to learn that not even his *Requiem* would be performed at the event and, perhaps more disturbingly, that Joachim and Clara's displeasure with him was in fact due to long-simmering tensions that neither had previously expressed. In July 1873, Joachim wrote to Brahms:

> A very intimate friend of ours heard me say that your letter, your whole manner, unfortunately, gives me the impression that you did not truly support the matter with heart and soul…But let us be quite open: I sensed quite generally, in recent years, that whenever we got together you were unable to recapture your former tone towards me.[243]

Strangely enough, it was actually Hermann Levi who managed to resolve this rift between the three old friends. According to Avins, correspondence found amongst Joachim's personal letters show that Levi had asked Clara and Joachim to "take Brahms as he was: that either he had been worth their friendship all these years, or they were mistaken all these years."[244] The three soon reconciled.

But Brahms would soon find other reasons to retreat from professional engagements. By the mid-1870s he was becoming increasingly self-conscious about what he perceived as his shortcomings as a concert pianist. Perhaps his growing

---

[242] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5 - 6*, in Ibid., 451.
[243] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5 - 6,* in Ibid., 454. The intimate friend is probably Clara.
[244] *Joachim Briefe*, in Ibid., 448.

reluctance to perform was motivated by a desire to distance himself from the more flashy composer-pianists of the New German School like Liszt for example, or it's possible that the rise of competitive virtuosic pianism in general laid bare certain technical deficiencies that were no longer accepted by audiences. Nevertheless, in early 1874 Brahms was invited to play and conduct an all-Brahms program at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig. Brahms wrote to the hall's music director Carl Reinecke:

> I suppose I may direct this reply to you, as well…How often have I forsworn playing in public!...I do not play, and now I am supposed to do so in your town. On the other hand, it seems to me childish to refuse…I am something of a hermit and inept in my outside dealings. Commend me to your fellow directors and tell them that I am grateful for their invitation and – resigned to my fate.[245]

Though he continued to perform his own works in private and on occasion in public, Brahms would soon all but abandon solo recital playing as "his technical inconsistencies became more troublesome to listeners not prepared for them, or not sympathetic towards him."[246] Brahms must surely have been aware of the less than glowing reviews of his pianism that circulated at the time. In 1880, the English composer Charles Stanford heard Brahms's performance of his own *Piano Concerto in B Flat Major*, and referred to the composer's "piano playing [as] not so much that of a finished pianist, as of a composer who despised virtuosity. The skips…were accomplished regardless of accuracy, and it is no exaggeration to say there were handfuls of wrong

[245] Reinecke. *Briefwechsel 3,* in Ibid., 464.
[246] Musgrave*, A Brahms Reader*, 124.

notes."[247] We will return to this review in the context of a more in-depth discussion of the particular nature of Brahms's pianism in the following chapter.

For now, Brahms's reluctance to perform publicly seems further evidenced by the fact that many of his letters to music directors and concert organizers before major performances contain earnest promises to practice. Perhaps he worried that they too had read the negative reviews and sought to pre-emptively assuage their fears. Indeed, in the same letter to Reinecke quoted above, Brahms goes on to write: "As far as I am concerned you may put a piano performance on the list. I'll practice."[248] In 1877 Brahms writes to his good friends Heinrich and Elisabet von Herzogenberg informing them of his intention to perform in Leipzig, to which they hospitably replied that he could stay with them and practice on their piano. Even practicing amongst friends however seems to have been a source of worry for Brahms, as he responds: "I would find it very agreeable to have to stay in a hotel for a few days. For I am embarrassed to practice in the house of friends, and that has to happen!" Elisabet, who was all too familiar with Brahms's aversion to practicing, replies:

> You only have a few meagre hours to practice, and without proper supervision you are sure not to put them to proper use – but I'll make sure, sit you down at the piano and then leave, so you won't be 'embarrassed.'[249]

Technical imperfections and general malaise aside, perhaps Brahms's instincts were right in preferring to perform only his own works. It seems that at least for a while, audiences were prepared to hear wrong notes on the concert stage provided that the one producing

[247] Stanford, *Pages*, 200, in Ibid., 125.
[248] Reinecke, *Briefwechsel 3*, in Avins, *BLL*, 464.
[249] Von Herzogenberg, *Briefwechsel 1 - 2*, in Ibid., 531.

them was he who penned them, thereby evidencing a chasm between a newer generation of professional performers and an older class of composer-pianists. As C. V. Stanford goes on to write about the composer's performance:

> The wrong notes did not really matter, they did not disturb his hearers any more than himself. He took it for granted that the public knew that he had written the right notes, and did not worry himself over such little trifles as hitting the wrong ones.[250]

Clara however seems to have been much less confident that Brahms's audiences would forgive him a few wrong notes. As Ferdinand Schumann recalls, his grandmother often expressed her displeasure at Brahms's decision not to engage local pianists in the performance of his works. On the eve of an 1895 Frankfurt performance of Brahms's clarinet sonatas featuring the composer at the piano and clarinettist Richard Mühlfeld, Clara is reported to have remarked that, "she did not approve of Brahms's taking the piano part…[and] that he should have engaged a Frankfort [sic] pianist, for his by no means technically perfect playing only lessened the effect produced by his compositions."[251] It is noteworthy that throughout their lengthy friendship, Clara often seemed much more worried about Brahms's reputation than even the composer himself: an issue to which we will return at great length in the following chapter. Perhaps for now it is enough to remark that discussions of Brahms's late style might benefit from including this element of playing 'as if the wrong notes did not really matter.'

From the 1880s onward, one begins to notice an increase in the frequency and severity of the many rifts between Brahms and those closest to him. Some gaffes, such as

---

[250] Stanford, *Pages*, 200, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 125.
[251] Ferdinand Schumann, "Brahms and Clara Schumann," *The Musical Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (October 1916): 512, accessed August 23, 2014, htto://www.jstor.org/stable/737934.

his difficulty in remembering names, were cause for amusement. Brahms loved to act as a go-between and establish connections amongst his widely scattered friends and colleagues throughout Europe. In the spring of 1880 he attempted to set up his friend, the great anti-Wagnerian music critic Eduard Hanslick, with a number of his musical contacts in Holland: a country whose praises Brahms sung often and warmly. After experiencing some difficulty in recalling their exact names and faces, Brahms light-heartedly wrote to Hanslick:

> I have a deplorably poor memory for persons and names. That is my least shortcoming, but the most highly perfected. How many friendly, dear people now appear more or less distinctly before my mind's eye. I feel deeply ashamed, uncouth, and ungrateful – I search for their names in vain.[252]

Other blunders were much more serious however, like the 1880 rift involving Brahms, Joachim and now Fritz Simrock as well. When Joachim came to suspect that his wife Amalie was committing adultery with Simrock, Brahms (who doesn't seem to have entertained the notion that Joachim's suspicions were legitimate) travelled to Berlin where he stayed a few days with the troubled couple. Brahms seems to have grasped the gravity of the situation from the beginning, as well as the many personal and professional relationships that hung in the balance. In July 1880 he wrote to Joachim:

> Your letter…has made me profoundly sad and comes to mind often and gloomily enough. So much there was that united you that one envisaged a long and happy life together. And now - ! A tangible, serious cause is hard to imagine; nor is it likely to exist…And

[252] From letters published in the *Neue Freie Presse* (July 1, 1897), in Avins, *BLL*, 562. See http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=nfp&datum=18970701&zoom=2 for the full issue.

> now the dissonance of a friendship torn apart has been added, as well! I don't suppose that you could have much interest in my work or in yours now.[253]

With thoughts of his long-suffering mother Christiane perhaps foremost in his mind, Brahms must have had only the best of intentions when he proceeded to pen a long letter to Amalie in which he rather explicitly painted her as a kind and honest wife at the mercy of a cruel and unreasonably jealous husband. As he would later unrepentantly explain to Joachim, "It was for me a solace, a liberation, to be able to tell your tormented wife – the same things I had told you often enough." Evidently, Brahms had broached the subject before. Regardless, when Amalie decides to use the letter as evidence in her divorce case against Joachim, the whole matter temporarily dissolves Brahms and Joachim's friendship, as well as a number of their mutual relationships. Correspondence between the two men ceases completely until 1883, when Brahms extends an olive branch by offering Joachim the Berlin premiere of his *Third Symphony*.[254]

Amidst his many rifts and reconciliations however, Brahms does seem to have been able to acknowledge the positive or to exercise his wry humour. Very rarely does one find exclusively dark and dejected tones in his correspondence, even whilst he was at his most ornery. In a letter itemizing a number of pressing editorial concerns to Hanslick in 1884, Brahms writes:

> But these are far-ranging themes and I don't want to dream up any more variations on them for you; they are too exclusively in minor, and I know very well that some in major are also possible and necessary.[255]

---

[253] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5 - 6*, in Ibid., 571.
[254] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5 - 6*, in Ibid., 570, 604 - 5.
[255] Hanslick, *Am Ende*, in Ibid., 614.

It is possible that Brahms's awareness of his own propensity for gloominess was related to how closely he monitored that of his closest friends. After receiving a series of dejected letters from Theodor Billroth, the aging composer became increasingly worried that the surgeon was falling into a solitary abyss. In July 1886, Brahms writes:

> It always sounds a bit melancholy when you write of feeling increasingly lonely. I have a sympathetic understanding for it, and wish you would be wary in time. I am the same way, after all – for I have long been and continue to be a terrible loner!

Brahms seems not to have noticed enough improvement in his friend's outlook, as nearly four years later and after receiving a particularly "serious and agitated" letter from Billroth, he again found reason to caution: "Gloomy contemplations are the ones we ought to guard against with care; others, and the most serious ones, we'll be able to cope with."[256]

Thus while Brahms had every reason to dub himself 'lonely outsider,' he did not seem to equate the label with dejected depression. In fact, around this time he increasingly felt the need to impose a modicum of solitude upon himself: both to avoid the sticky social situations in which he frequently found himself, and to carry on with his work uninterrupted as well. In a letter to his friend the Baroness Freifrau von Heldberg, he delicately declines her invitation to join her at her residence, writing:

> For I believe that you must often consider me ungrateful and dishonest, and in a certain sense then you may also be right…I dislike speaking of myself and my peculiarities…I

[256] *Billroth - Brahms*, in Ibid., 639, 674.

> need absolute solitude, not only in order to accomplish what I am capable of, but also, quite generally, to think about my vocation.

Most tellingly perhaps, Brahms explains further:

> This is rooted in my temperament, but it may also be readily explained otherwise…Well, someone like me, who finds enjoyment in life and in art beyond himself, is only too much inclined to savour both – and to neglect other matters.[257]

Given the personal and professional trials of the years leading up to the composition of Brahms's late piano works Op. 116 - 119, it is hardly surprising that scholars and performers alike have often distilled the reigning affect of these enigmatic works down to that of resigned sadness, solitude and nostalgia. As we have seen however, Brahms's love for his troubled Hamburg family home and for the turmoil of the Schumann household evidences a much more dynamic, shifting, fleeting, restless and unfolding brand of nostalgia. His growing feelings of alienation and solitude were primarily self-inflicted, and often precipitated by his quick tongue, his meddling in others' affairs, and his ill-tempered and occasionally cruel manner. Throughout however, we have seen that he was equally quick to engage his famously wry sense of humour, to play games and tell jokes, to help his friends, and to take part in all manner of schemes and intrigues.

During the final years of Brahms's life one does however witness an escalation in the gravity and frequency of the quarrels in which he often found himself embroiled, as well as in the loss of those dearest to him. But this only seems to amplify the dynamism

[257] Von Heldburg, *Briefwechsel 17*, in Ibid., 645.

of his deepening feelings of nostalgia, while perhaps also encouraging him to continue to seek out the company of those he loved. Indeed, in the years to come Brahms would carry on as before: composing, maintaining contact with his closest friends, travelling widely, and revelling in the long evenings of food, drink and music that gave him so much pleasure and reminded him of those whose company he could no longer enjoy.

2.4) The Op. 116 - 119 Years

In October 1891 Brahms was thoroughly caught off guard by Clara's indignant reaction to the publication of his first edition of Robert Schumann's *Fourth Symphony*: an endeavour that had occupied him for some time, and of which Clara had been fully informed. Brahms writes:

> It was always my express view that the work should appear in this form; you knew about it, and also – in any case, you didn't say No to it, of that I am certain…I don't want to cite evidence and names, above all, but – how dearly I should have liked to let you too thoroughly examine that beautiful double score, if you hadn't viewed it with such a doubtful expression from the start.

Clara naturally had every right to be protective of her late husband's legacy, but with uncharacteristic hostility she replied that the whole matter had left her "richer by one more sad experience."[258] Whether or not Clara's rage had in fact been precipitated by an irritable ear ailment as suggested by Avins, Brahms was deeply hurt and was left with the overwhelming impression that Clara had long been quietly critical of his editions of Robert's music and his gaucheness in personal dealings. The ensuing rift in their friendship lasted for nearly a year before Brahms finally reached out in September 1892:

> Grant a poor outsider the pleasure of telling you today that he thinks of you with never changing veneration …I am unfortunately an outsider to you more than any other…I am aware of just one fault vis-à-vis my friends: awkwardness in my relations. You have treated this with great forbearance for a long time. Had you only done so for a few years more.

[258] *Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe*, in Ibid., 688 - 89.

In the same letter however, Brahms does confess that he had long suspected Clara of opposing his editions of her late husband's music: an insecurity that had only deepened upon discovering that she had left his editions out of the *Complete Schumann Edition*. In desperation he attempts to win her over her with flattery:

> I am used to loneliness and ought to be, at the thought of this great emptiness. But I can repeat to you today that you and your husband are for me the most beautiful experience of my life, and represent its greatest treasure and its noblest content.[259]

Clara seems to have been genuinely touched by this reaffirmation of Brahms's commitment to both her and the legacy of her husband, and promises in her reply to include Brahms's Schumann editions in a forthcoming supplement to the *Complete Edition*. Clara's response also reveals the possibility that the disagreement may have temporarily suspended their lively working relationship as well, whereby Brahms would send her newly completed works for her perusal and commentary:

> Let us strike up a more friendly tone towards each other, to which end your beautiful new piano pieces, which Ilona wrote to me about, offer the best opportunity if you want it![260]

Because the 'beautiful new piano pieces' to which Clara refers are in fact those of Op. 116 - 119, it seems as though they came into being at a time when the potential loss of his greatest personal and professional ally weighed heavily on Brahms's mind. It isn't

---

[259] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, in Ibid., 696.
[260] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, in Ibid., 697. Ilona Eibenschütz was both Clara's and Brahms's pupil and will be discussed at length in the following chapters.

surprising that he evokes Robert's memory in his plea for mercy from Clara's wrath, as the prospect of losing one of his last living connections to his memories of the couple and their Düsseldorf home must have terrified him. It seems likely therefore that nostalgic reminiscences of those beautiful and tragic days of his youth were as much on Brahms's mind during the composition of his last four sets of piano works, as was his fear of losing Clara in his old age. These pieces might therefore be seen as already capturing the dynamism of Brahms's unique brand of nostalgia, as they evoke past love and sadness, they anticipate future loss, while also serving as a therapeutic elixir for the renewal of Brahms and Clara's friendship in the present.

Before Clara and Brahms's dispute over his edition of Schumann's *Fourth Symphony* was finally resolved however, the composer lost both Elisabet von Herzogenberg and his sister Elise within the space of just six months. Elise Brahms had always been rather sickly (as alluded to on the occasion of Johann Jakob's desertion of his family), but her condition had deteriorated significantly over the last few years of her life. In light of her long-suffering illness, Brahms reassuringly wrote to his stepmother Karoline that, "the final respite has been granted to her and was to be hoped for – life *like that* is no longer a life."[261]

While Brahms seems to have taken his sister's passing with a certain amount of stoicism, Elisabet's death was devastating. *Née* Elisabet Stockhausen, she had been Brahms's pupil in Vienna during the 1860s before the two became reacquainted in Leipzig after her marriage to Heinrich von Herzogenberg. Far from being simply a gracious hostess and an influential patron of the arts, Elisabet was also a gifted musician whose opinion on musical matters was highly prized by the composer. Brahms would

[261] Stephenson, *Familie,* in Ibid., 692. Emphasis is Brahms's.

frequently share his newest works with her, and Elisabet's highly intuitive responses were a key factor in Brahms's compositional process.[262] Remembering Elisabet to her husband Heinrich in January 1892, Brahms writes:

> To try to express to you what possesses me so completely and deeply is a futile endeavour…You know how inexpressibly much I have lost in your dear wife…what a comfort it would be for me if I could only sit with you in silence and press your hand and recall with you the dear, magnificent person![263]

Though Brahms surely mourned Elisabet's premature death for her integral role in his creative processes, for her devotion to his music, and for her inclusion of the composer in the cultured and influential circles in which she moved, it is possible that he harboured some romantic feelings for her as well. Indeed, while she was still his piano student in Vienna, he is known to have "confessed a fear of his feelings for her to male friends and entrusted her instruction on piano to Julius Epstein," [264] Brahms's friend and colleague at the Vienna Conservatory. While their relationship would resume after her marriage on much more platonic grounds, their flirtatiously coy correspondence and Brahms's frequent annoyance with her husband Heinrich perhaps hints that Brahms's earlier infatuation may not have completely dissipated. In any case, in the years surrounding the composition of the late piano works, Op. 116 - 119, valuable personal and artistic allies were commodities Brahms could ill-afford to lose. Unfortunately, he would lose three such personalities within as many months.

---

[262] Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, xv.
[263] Von Herzogenberg, *Briefwechsel 1 - 2,* in Avins, *BLL*, 690 - 91.
[264] Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 55.

By the 1890s, Brahms, Theodor Billroth and Eduard Hanslick, once referred to as 'The Triumvirate' by Austrian critic Richard Specht,[265] were not as tightly knit as they had once been. In the trio's heyday, both Billroth and Hanslick had steadfastly remained at Brahms's side throughout all of the line drawing and finger pointing incited by the composer's 1860 manifesto. And though Brahms never publicly shared his friends' mutual opposition to Wagner's music, the surviving correspondence between the three men evidences their once closely aligned musical tastes and shared love for history, literature, drama and art.

In 1892 however, Brahms discovered that Billroth was gravely ill. In the six years since Brahms had cautioned him against melancholy thoughts, it seems that Billroth's deteriorating condition had rendered him less able to tolerate Brahms's pricklier side: a facet of the composer's personality that he seems to have quietly suffered for some time. Irritated and depleted of energy, Billroth wrote a letter to their mutual friend Hanslick in which he attributed Brahms's poor manners to deficiencies of up-bringing: a letter that mistakenly ends up in Brahms's own hands. In a letter to Hanslick immediately afterwards, Brahms reveals that he too had grown weary of defending himself to his acquaintances:

> You need not concern yourself in the least! I scarcely read Billroth's letter, returned it immediately to its envelope and merely shook my head softly…That one is also taken by all friends and acquaintances for something other than what he is (or indeed, to their mind, what he pretends to be), that's an old experience for me. [In] Goethe's words: Blest is he who, without hatred, shuts himself off from the world.[266]

---

[265] Specht, *Leben und Werk*, in Ibid., 193.
[266] Hanslick, *Am Ende*, in Avins, *BLL, 700*.

Tragically, Hanslick never worked up the courage to tell Billroth about the errant letter, and as a result the latter had no idea why, at a musical soirée some weeks later, Brahms openly treated him with boorish rudeness. Their relationship would never recover. When Billroth eventually succumbs to his illness in February 1894, Brahms writes to his friend the Swiss scholar Joseph Viktor Widmann, again evidencing his propensity for monitoring his friends' moods and for anticipating future losses:

> But I have sensed that loss for years and will do so again in later years…Just now, however, I felt, probably along with many of his acquaintances, a sense of deliverance. In the last few years I was never together with Billroth without leaving quite gloomy and sad. His serious illness and his ailing heart had simply made an old man of him…like a shadow of [his] former energy and joie de vivre, embarrassing and uncomfortable.[267]

The second loss of 1894 was that of Hans von Bülow: a converted Wagner enthusiast, conductor and pianist who had become a devout Brahmsian later in life. The final chapter of Brahms and Bülow's friendship follows a painfully similar script as that of the former and Billroth's: advancing age, a lessening of tolerance for one another's eccentricities, simmering tensions and crippling illness, all seems to have left the two men easily offended. While the Op. 116 - 119 piano pieces would play a conciliatory role in the mending of Brahms's relationship with Clara months later, they were involved in the breakdown of that of Brahms and Bülow in 1892.

That summer, Hans von Bülow was invited to christen a new concert hall in Berlin with a performance that was to include some music by his friend, Johannes Brahms. Bülow was also busy with plans for an album of compositions whose release

---

[267] Widmann, *Briefwechsel 8,* in Ibid., 712 - 13.

was set to coincide with the unveiling of a monument in honour of Heinrich Heine.[268] Brahms obligingly sent Bülow the manuscript of his *Fantasien* Op. 116 "for yr. kind consideration and selection," which the latter accepted warmly. Unfortunately however, Bülow returned the pieces and made a rather uncouth request: for Brahms to send some additional, lighter fare for his Heine compilation. Brahms, offended by Bülow's "dagger-words," writes:

> I always hoped and believed that nothing could ever seduce me to do anything of the sort. Only this summer I have had to fight off a ½ dozen exhibition and master albums, and how often with a more serious, better justification: and now – you too, Brutus!...You have only your own objective in view – I, on the other hand, always see only what emerges artistically…I don't consider your poet the seducer even now, but only you and your wish to which, for now, I reply only with this sigh.[269]

While Brahms's weariness, frustration and perhaps even vanity are clear, it seems as though he took most offence at what he perceived as Bülow's misunderstanding or underestimation of his artistic principles, though it could be argued that Brahms was entirely justified in expecting one of his closest friends to know how he would respond to such a request. In the same letter Brahms couldn't resist slinging one last handful of dirt, writing: "With regard to that poet, I must confess that at home he is very far in the rear of a cupboard and is rarely fetched out for pleasure." To make matters worse, Bülow acknowledged receipt of the manuscript by way of telegram only, and played no Brahms on the occasion of his concert.[270]

---

[268] Avins, *BLL,* 693.
[269] Von Bülow, *Briefe*, in Ibid., 694.
[270] Von Bülow, *Briefe*, in Ibid., 693 - 94.

Given the bluntness of his letter to Bülow, it is curious that Brahms seems to have been genuinely confused and surprised by what he understandably interpreted as Bülow's snub of both him and his music. It is possible he was pushed by Clara to assume the worse, as she and Bülow shared a profound and public dislike for one another. Bülow was also known for being "irascible…quarrelsome, nervous, passionate and given to extremes of mood"[271]: a reputation that may have led Brahms to believe he was just another innocent victim of Bülow's irrational, tactless nature. In any case, frustrated and confused, Brahms writes to publisher Simrock, while also managing to make a wry joke about the title of his *Fantasien* Op. 116:

> I don't know how I stand with Bülow…I don't know whether you are on visiting terms with [him]. In case you would or could pay him a visit (he is there already), you might discover what various fantasies are occupying him. I will definitely not play along; I am heartily fed up with dealing with acquaintances and friends other than in the most straightforward fashion.[272]

As with Hanslick and Billroth, illness and misunderstanding played a prominent role in this newest drama. Unbeknownst to Brahms, Bülow didn't perform the new Op. 116 pieces because he was in fact seriously ill. Brahms's understandable impression that he and his new pieces had been snubbed was then further compounded by the fact that Bülow also refused to meet with him at the hall's opening even though Brahms was in attendance. Again however, it appears that Bülow was simply too unwell to receive visitors after the concert. Sadly, the health of Brahms's great friend and champion would

---

[271] Christopher Fifield, "Hans Freiherr von Bülow," in *Oxford Music Online*, accessed May 31, 2012, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/04307.
[272] Simrock, *Briefwechsel 11 - 12*, in Avins, *BLL*, 695.

deteriorate rapidly, and the two men never met nor directly communicated again. Bülow would also die in February 1894, just six days after Billroth.[273]

Even more tragically, Brahms sent a letter to Bülow in late October 1892 describing how he had accidentally discovered, "with astonishment and deep emotion" that his old friend had actually made a copy of the Op. 116 pieces for himself before sending the original back to the composer, most likely with the intention of learning them once his health improved. What Brahms had interpreted as rejection was in fact an attempt on Bülow's part to both respectfully return the original manuscript to the composer on one hand, while keeping a copy of the pieces for himself to learn on the other. The next year, Brahms sends Marie Bülow a letter that reportedly moves her husband to tears:

> I feel a most powerful and earnest desire to hear about your dear husband…As I greet you and him right from the heart, I repeat my urgent request for news. You won't believe how gratefully each little word will be read by your deeply and sincerely devoted J. Brahms. [274]

The third artistic and personal ally Brahms lost in the early spring of 1894 was the German musicologist, theologian, philologist and biographer of Robert Schumann, Philipp Spitta. Spitta was the leading German music scholar of the time, and the two men frequently consulted each other on matters of music history, the authenticity of manuscripts, and regarding historical stylistic critique. Spitta was also a devoted

---

[273] Avins, *BLL*, 693
[274] Von Bülow, *Briefe,* in Ibid.*,* 695, 707.

Brahmsian, and invokes many of the tropes examined in the previous chapter as he extolls the composer's virtues in 1892:

> Brahms demonstrates practically…that in these [that is classical] forms something new can 'still' be said. Not 'still', but always…Even those composers who think that they have broken them, and thereby have accomplished an act of liberation…only do it much worse than does he who enters into the inheritance from the past with full awareness and with the intention of employing it in the service of the beautiful.[275]

For all their mutual affection and historical affinities however, Brahms and Spitta didn't always agree. An argument over the function of church music threatened their friendship in the late 1870s, and nearly caused Brahms to withdraw his dedication of the *Motets* Op. 74 as a result.[276] Brahms and Spitta also disagreed over the authenticity of a setting of the Passion According to St. Luke that had been attributed to J.S. Bach. As the leading Bach authority of the time, Spitta asserted that the setting was unquestionably authentic, while Brahms claimed it was not. For all of Spitta's authority however, it seems that the opinion and reputation of the composer carried more musical weight, as thereafter the work was considered to be spurious, and remains outside of the Bach canon to this day.[277]

Perhaps it is fitting therefore that Spitta would die suddenly at his desk amidst a new drama over the function and artistic value of folk song. He and Brahms had exchanged a series of letters in early 1894 discussing the artistic failings of a recently released collection of folk songs by Ludwig Erk, as well as Brahms's new seven-volume

---

[275] Spitta, *Zur Musik*, 416 - 17, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 236 - 37.
[276] Avins, *BLL*, 158
[277] Ibid., 161.

collection *49 German Folksongs* WoO 33. While Brahms's songs referenced the older, more unusual and challenging melodies of rural Germany, Ludwig Erk's collection favoured clear, unsophisticated melodies in major modes: something to which Brahms took great exception.[278] Brahms was so irked in fact, that he wrote a pubic denunciation of Erk's collection and sent it for Spitta to peruse in April 1894. Brahms's propensity for starting conflicts, his high opinion of Spitta, and his doubt that he would have the scholar's full support, are all clear when he writes:

> Motivated initially by that book, which has annoyed me outrageously, but then against…Erk and all of these types who have a monopoly on folk-song…I want to ask whether I might perhaps be permitted to send you the above-mentioned 'polemic' and whether you would say a few words as to how it appears to you…Well – looking forward amiably to your declining amiably, with warm greetings.

Though decidedly less hot headed than Brahms, Spitta agreed with the composer on the lack of musical and historical integrity shown by the creator of the Erk compilation. For his part however, Brahms seems to have quickly backed down from his earlier intention to write a public polemic against Erk. Just three days after his first letter to Spitta on the matter, Brahms writes: "I now feel inclined to let the quarrel be, and to present this kind of a collection as a *cheerful polemic*!"[279] Perhaps Brahms felt that his folksongs would make his point all on their own, and retracted his written polemic to avoid becoming embroiled in yet another bitter and public quarrel. Unfortunately, Spitta would die the day after receiving Brahms's more coolly worded letter and the accompanying set of new folksongs. All of this however evidences not only the fervour

[278] Ibid., 714
[279] Spitta, *Briefwechsel 16*, in Ibid., 715.

and changeability of Brahms's moods, but his competitiveness as well. Narratives concerning his self-abnegating hyperawareness of Beethoven's shadow seem miles away from the bravura of his readiness to smite perceived rivals or pretenders to his craft.

Amongst the many other personal losses Brahms suffered in the years surrounding the composition and publication of the Op. 116 - 119 pieces, three other notable deaths were that of Otto Dessoff, Christian Detmering, and Hermine Spies. While Dessoff's conducting abilities as director of the Vienna Philharmonic Concerts once prompted Brahms to complain to Hermann Levi that the "orchestra ha[d] really gone to pot because of him," the two men nonetheless enjoyed a long and rewarding friendship. Brahms even entrusted Dessoff with the premiere of his *First Symphony*. During the fifteen years of Dessoff's directorship in Vienna, Brahms became a mainstay at the Dessoff family dinner table, where he revelled in Frau Frederike's excellent cooking and her husband's "energy and sense of purpose."[280]

Christian Detmering was Brahms's maternal cousin as well as a musician and the proprietor of an instrument shop in Hamburg. Throughout all of the upheavals and tragedies surrounding Brahms's immediate family in Hamburg, including Johann Jakob's abandonment of his family and the deaths of both his mother Christiane and sister Elise, the sheer volume of correspondence between Brahms and Detmering suggests that the latter was deeply involved in and committed to familial matters. After Elise's death in June 1892, Brahms writes to Christian:

> I wrote to you and to her only yesterday…Now – for the last time – you have some very disagreeable and sad chores because of us, and on my account. I have no particular

[280] Levi, *Briefwechsel 7,* and Kalbeck, *Brahms 2,* in Ibid., 393, 778.

> wishes and anything you arrange and any way you arrange it suits me…I don't know what else remains for me to say, only that I owe you my greatest, most solemn thanks![281]

Sadly, it would indeed be 'the last time' Brahms would rely on Detmering to settle affairs in Hamburg on his behalf, as his cousin succumbed to the cholera outbreak that swept through Hamburg that same year.

Contralto Hermine Spies was reportedly a "gifted, quick-witted woman from the Rhineland [that] invigorated the 50-year-old composer with her merry nature and spirited renderings of his songs."[282] Having first met in 1883, the two shared a number of flirtatious letters and often performed the composer's newest vocal works together in private performances in the salons of their mutual friends. Though many members of Brahms's closest circle predicted a marriage between the singer and composer, Brahms, who was nearly twenty-five years Spies's senior, never formalized their relationship. Whatever the nature of their arrangement however, they remained close for many years and her premature death must have only added to his deepening feelings of isolation, sadness and nostalgia. His relationship with Spies perhaps also evidences that he was by no means immune to female charms in his later years. Nor was he above jealousy, for that matter. After learning of Spies's holiday at a North Sea resort where she cavorted on the beach with cellist Robert Hausmann and poet Klaus Groth, in 1887 Brahms writes to her:

---

[281] From letters to Christian Detmering held in the Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek [I.N. 74489], in Avins, *BLL,* 691.

[282] George S. Bozarth and Walter Frisch, "Johannes Brahms: At the Summit," in *Oxford Music Online*, accessed May 31, 2012, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51879pg4.

> Eight pages I wrote to you yesterday, but I cannot send them off, they are a pure and unadulterated E flat minor chord, so sad, and by the way, replete with poisonous envy of cellists and poets, and how well off they are![283]

While Brahms seems to have survived the loss of four intimate female relationships in rapid succession (Elise and Christiane Brahms, Elisabet von Herzogenberg, and Hermine Spies), the most profound and painful of all would be that of Clara in 1896. When Clara had a small stroke earlier that year, Brahms appears to have been somewhat stoically resigned to her passing, though his strength may have been for the benefit of their close friends and family alone. In April 1896, Brahms writes to Joachim:

> The thought of losing her can terrify us no longer, not even me, the lonely one, for whom there is all too little alive in the world. And when she will have gone from us, will our faces not glow with pleasure whenever we recollect her?

But for all his outward acceptance of the reality of Clara's condition, the aging composer was deeply worried. Shortly after his letter to Joachim, Brahms writes to Clara's daughter Marie:

> I must express to you this earnest, heartfelt plea: If you believe that the worst is to be expected, grant me a word so I can come and still see open those dear eyes which, when they close – will close so much for me! Forgive me! I hope with all my soul that my concern may be unnecessary.[284]

---

[283] Spies, *Ein Gedenkbuch*, in Avins, *BLL*, 647.
[284] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5 - 6, Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe,* in Ibid.*,* 732.

Brahms was reportedly grief-stricken at Clara's funeral in May 1896. Photographs taken on the day "show him with a somewhat swarthy complexion, indicat[ing] that the disease which killed him had already advanced far enough to cause the first sign of jaundice." While we have already seen how rarely Brahms is mentioned in scholarly discussions of composers' illnesses, it seems that in his later years he was indeed wrestling with "impaired bodies...and their failure to function in a normal way"[285] - not just his own, but those of his dearest friends as well. Indeed, and as we will see in later chapters, Brahms's knowledge of Clara's physical ailments later in life may have prompted him not only to share his newest piano works with their many fine pupils, but to write physical puzzles into the fabric of his late piano works as well. In any case, and in spite of his poor condition, Brahms's distress at the loss of his oldest friend and the last living link to his mentor Robert Schumann was so acute that many contemporaneous observers attributed his rapidly deteriorating health to Clara's death alone.

Other than a few letters to Marie and Eugenie Schumann regarding the settlement of Clara's affairs and the security of her collection of personal diaries and letters (which Brahms worried might land in the wrong hands), there is surprisingly little surviving communication between Brahms and those closest to him on the subject of Clara's death. While this could be attributed to his increasingly poor health, or to the fact that his inner circle was quickly diminishing in numbers, the letters he penned in the last years of his life suggest that despite everything, he doggedly continued to indulge in copious amounts of wine, food and tobacco, while revelling in long evenings of intimate music-making with those friends he still had. Immediately after Clara's funeral, the Von Beckeraths

[285] Avins, *BLL,* 679, and Straus, "Disability and 'Late Style,'" 12. Brahms died of liver cancer.

whisked Brahms away to their home on the Rhine for a diversionary musical party with a few close friends. He later describes the events of that day to another acquaintance:

> Every year at Whitsuntide there is a large gathering of a fair number of particularly precious friends at the large estate of a mutual friend. This time I was less inclined than usual to attend. Fortunately, I let myself to be taken along. How empty and desolate my mood would doubtless have been on the way home, and how beautifully did the earnest funeral solemnities now fade away in that glorious region, amid excellent company and the loveliest music![286]

Despite the many bitter quarrels and devastating personal losses Brahms suffered in the years surrounding the composition of his 'lullabies,' the Op. 116 - 119 piano pieces, he sought a kind of final refuge in his work and his friends. He downplays his fatal illness until nearly the very end, writing to one of his last surviving friends, Josef Widmann, in late 1896:

> It is a quite commonplace jaundice...as is asserted following the most thorough examinations of every kind. Incidentally, I have not had one day of pain or anything - nor lost my appetite for even one meal.[287]

When Brahms does finally reveal the true severity of his condition he does so to Joachim and his stepmother Karoline: his closest living links to the two domestic environments he missed so deeply. To Joachim he writes:

---

[286] Fellinger, *Briefwechsel 7*, in Avins, *BLL*, 736.
[287] Widmann, *Briefwechsel* 8, in Ibid., 740.

> I am definitely not any better; that makes me irritable and despondent. But when I feel like complaining, I need merely look around in my closest circle and no longer have any grounds.

A month later, he again writes to Joachim in order to report that he is "doing more and more miserably; [and that] each word, spoken or written, is torture."[288] And then just days before his death, he writes to Karoline:

> For the sake of a change I have lain down for a while and writing is therefore uncomfortable. Apart from that have no fear, nothing has changed and as usual, all I need is patience.[289]

While sadness, alienation, loneliness and ruminative nostalgia are typically seen as the prevailing and controlled emotional content of Brahms's 'lullabies of his sorrows' Op. 116 - 119, perhaps his use of the term *lullabies* (from 'to lull') hints at something decidedly familiar, domestic, comforting and most of all, dynamic. In other words, if one reads Brahms's statement as 'the reprieve from' or 'cure of' my sorrows, perhaps these works are informed by a shifting amalgam of memories and experiences past and present that were soothing distractions and remedies for the sorrow that might otherwise have overpowered him in his old age. In our examination of historical evidence typically viewed as ephemera, Brahms's letters reveal his lifelong yearning for two domestic environments that represented both love and pain: his family home in Hamburg and Clara's household in Düsseldorf. While Brahms often recalled both familial situations

---

[288] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5 - 6*, in Ibid., 744 - 45.
[289] Stephenson, *Familie*, in Ibid., 745.

with a mixture of sadness, loneliness, alienation and nostalgia, we have seen how his experience of these emotions was not resigned, stoic and therefore static and controlled, but rather shifting, restless, fragmentary, impassioned and unfolding.

We have also seen how in the years leading up to his composition of the late piano opuses Brahms experienced a wide range of emotional and physical states, not all of which are reconcilable with modern understandings of his control, including his propensity for irritability, callousness, competitiveness and jealousy; his love of food, drink, games, humour and women; the fervour and changeability of his moods; his tendency to play with abandon; his Kreislerian affinity for the inner and outer torment of love and loss, and his association of those affinities with people he recalled often and longingly; and his passion for long evenings of music-making *en petit comité* by twilight or at dusk, surrounded by friends, and with doors thrown open to the night breezes.[290]

Finally, we have examined how Brahms's final years were indeed characterized by the deterioration of the bodies and minds of those in his innermost circle, himself included. In transcripts of pianist Bruce Hungerford's lessons with Brahms's and Clara Schumann's pupil Carl Friedberg, Friedberg is explicit in his assertion that performances of Brahms's late piano works must take into account the composer's non-normative body. In the case of the *Intermezzo in E Minor* Op. 116 no. 5, to which we will return later in this volume, Friedberg's words suggest to me that narratives concerning Brahms's late mental and physical health are deeply pre-structured by an aesthetic ideology of control:

---

[290] Mrs. Carl Derenburg (Ilona Eibenschütz), "My Recollections of Brahms," *The Musical Times* 67, no. 1001 (July 1926): 599, accessed August 23, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/911829.

> Brahms was in his last years...he was so fat, with such an awful... always waddled when he went. He ate too much, he drank too much cognac and everything, wine. So, he was a little bit short of breath. Now, look into his music. Look, I give you all the examples. Take Opus 116 (he sings from Op. 116, no. 5)…There is a kind of despair not known to him of course, nothing is conscious, it's subconscious, you know. Despair and snatching for air and for freedom, you know, get out of this horrible shell which begins through cancer to decline. He had jaundice already and you know he had cancer of the liver. But he wanted to get, his spirit wanted to leave that sick body, you know, because he didn't heed the warning he had that he shouldn't eat so much and shouldn't do this and shouldn't do that, he didn't. Alright, his flesh was weak, but his spirit as a musician was so strong, finally it said to him, 'I can't live with you anymore.' So he tried to break the chains and get rid of himself. It's documented…Even when he consoles himself after the excitement, no, no, no, no, keep quiet, also in gasps…We have to take those things as expression of personal feeling.[291]

In light of this evidence, ephemeral though it may be, discussions of 'lateness' in Brahms that only highlight themes such as anachronism, authorial belatedness, and historicism for example, or those that posit his emotional states as resigned and ruminative, do seem pre-structured by the Brahmsian aesthetic ideology of mental and physical control. In the next chapter, we will examine how this ideology has led to similarly mediated assessments of the described and recorded performance styles of the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists.

---

[291] Ann Riesbeck DiClemente, "Brahms Performance Practice in a New Context: The Bruce Hungerford Recorded Lessons with Carl Friedberg," (PhD Dissertation: University of Maryland, 2009), 59 - 60, from Transcript 368 - 70, accessed July 24, 2013, via ProQuest Dissertations.

3) The Pianists of the Schumann - Brahms Circle.

3.1) Introduction

As the tenets of the historically-informed performance practice movement push ever farther into later repertoires, they have encountered those performance styles for which we have both documentary and sounding traces. Twenty years ago, Robert Philip predicted that when modern reconstructions of "authentic" Elgar met Elgar as he was recorded, there would be "a collision between two worlds, a real world which no longer exists, and a reconstructed world which never wholly existed except in the imagination."[292] Those of us who may have anticipated a similar cataclysm in the late piano music of Johannes Brahms have since witnessed a strange stalemate: despite believing in the historical validity of their performances, mainstream, HIP and RIP pianists are still reluctant to play in ways that come anywhere near the described and recorded performance styles of the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists.

On the surface, this gap seems to persist because mainstream pianists continue to believe in an unbroken performance tradition stretching back to Brahms's day, viewing the long-eradicated unnotated expressive devices evidenced by late-Romantic recordings as mere remnants of that epoch's as yet unbridled sentimentalism and shoddy technique. HIP pianists tend to rely on more malleable documentary traces such as treatises, ignoring what comparisons between historical utterances and recordings might teach us

[292] Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900 - 1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 228.

about the limits of historical recreationist practices based on non-sounding traces. Even RIP pianists (those consciously reproducing elements of early-recorded pianism) tend to selectively apply only those elements that "do not challenge current notions of good taste or that do not take us out of our comfort zone."[293]

Instead of examining what lies in the lingering gaps between historical traces of past performance styles and the modern historicist acts they inspire, it is common to hear that period performance, even when approached selectively, is a worthwhile and even experimental venture because it affords an opportunity to hear old music with new ears or, as Bernard D. Sherman observes, "HIP Brahms is thriving more than I expected, because it continues to rekindle musicians' passion for Brahms."[294] Of his own applications of late-Romantic style as captured on early recordings, RIP pianist Neal Peres Da Costa asserts that, "Having *experimented* with this, it becomes almost inconceivable to play this music in the straightjacketed manner nowadays frequently heard. Such a way sounds to me emotionally restricted: devoid of the living, breathing expression that one can so easily imagine Brahms having intended."[295] But how experimental are these forays into period style, and do they really take us anywhere new? Few pianists, Da Costa included, seem willing to imitate the extremity and frequency of nineteenth-century pianists' use of unnotated expressive devices like dislocation, arpeggiation and tempo modification; while tending to ignore their more serious textual violations like elision and truncation altogether.

---

[293] Neal Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 310.
[294] Bernard D. Sherman, "Orchestral Brahms and 'Historically Informed Performance': A Progress Report," last paragraph, accessed July 23, 2013, http://bsherman.net/Brahms_Diapason_Sherman_English.htm.
[295] Da Costa, *Off the Record,* 250. Emphasis is mine.

While early-recorded Brahms style tends to be faster and less portentous than modern Brahms style, there is still a tendency among pianists to view the constitutive elements of the former as a "meretricious sugar coating,"[296] a decorative flavouring that can be added or subtracted to any degree with few implications for how Brahms's works sound and signify in performance. This tendency seems to be buttressed by a lingering fidelity to the work concept and a pervasive distinction between musical style and content: one that, as Susan Sontag asserts in relation to literary studies, "holds together the fabric of critical discourse, and serves to perpetuate certain intellectual aims and vested interests which themselves remain unchallenged and would be difficult to surrender without a fully articulated working replacement at hand."[297] It is my contention that Brahms as he was recorded is kept at arm's length from modern HIP and RIP Brahms because it threatens to expose a dangerous absurdity at the heart of the 'claims and vested interests' of the aesthetic ideology of Brahmsian control: namely, that according to such ideas, Brahms might today be deemed a historically-*un*informed Brahms pianist.

By viewing only those elements of early-recorded Brahms style that are compatible with the ideology of control as 'content,' while everything else is dismissed as non-essential 'style,' the hale and hearty Brahms of our imagination remains protected from Brahms as he was recorded, and so the gaps between historical traces and modern historicist acts persist. Perhaps then HIP and RIP Brahms is popular *because* it is nothing like the recorded evidence: it satisfies our appetite for hearing old music with new ears without destabilising the very ideology that pre-structures scholarly and performative

---

[296] Will Crutchfield, "Brahms, By Those Who Knew Him," *Opus* 2, no. 5 (1986): 18, in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 42.
[297] Susan Sontag, "On Style," first section, second paragraph, accessed July 23, 2013, http://www.coldbacon.com/writing/sontag-onstyle.html.

assessments of that evidence, while also reinforcing performance norms that resist the very experimentation the evidence itself seems to invite. As we have already seen, contemporary Brahms performances that do not communicate mental and physical control risk being labelled historically invalid, leaving performers more aware of the evidence than ever, yet afraid to produce truly experimental 'fully articulated working replacements' for understandings of 'characteristic' Brahmsian sound and meaning. While there is nothing wrong with using historical traces selectively, in order to problematize assumptions of the historical validity of the Brahmsian aesthetic ideology of control and its protective performance norms it seems important to at least *try* to attempt an 'all or nothing' approach to evidence of Brahms's performance contexts.

Before this radical approach can be attempted however, over the course of this chapter I will show how notions of 'authentic' Brahmsian control have been buttressed by highly pre-structured assessments of the performance styles of the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists. I will argue that descriptions of Clara's preternaturally controlled pianism have been posited as a central ideal to which most pianists in her circle aspired, while deviations from that ideal have been dismissed as historically spurious, non-essential, and thus expendable. To demonstrate the performative implications of this approach, I will offer a brief discussion of how the elements of early-recorded Brahms style continue to be selected and applied according to a Clara-centric ideology of control, resulting in performances that keep the Brahms of our imagination at a safe distance from Brahms as he was recorded.

3.2) The Clara Schumann Ideal

> No pianist ever before retained so powerful a hold upon the public mind for so long.[298]

Although we have no sounding evidence of Clara Schumann at the piano, descriptions of her performances and the precepts of her teaching are found throughout the historical documentary record. While such accounts are undoubtedly laden with the agendas of those positioning themselves within the contemporaneous cultural-political debates already surveyed, the language used to describe Clara's pianism is key to understanding why we continue to be so invested in positing it as central to a unified Schumann-Brahms 'school' of pianism. As Michael Musgrave asserts:

> Clara was so intimate with the compositions of Brahms and his artistic values...[and] Brahms in his turn was truly a part of the Schumann artistic tradition. Many descriptions survive...of her teaching and the qualities she sought... [and] though speaking in the first place of playing Schumann's music, the remarks have equal relevance to Brahms.[299]

Despite having achieved immense success as an interpreter in her own right over a sixty-year concert career, much of Clara's reputation hinged upon her omnipresence in the private and professional contexts that gave rise to the piano music of Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms. She and her pupils championed the former's music

---

[298] "Madame Schumann," *TMTASCC* 25, no. 494 (April 1, 1884): 201, accessed April 18, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3359258.

[299] Michael Musgrave, "Early Trends in the Performance of Brahms's Piano Music," in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, ed. Michael Musgrave and Bernard D. Sherman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 316.

throughout his institutionalization and after his death, while insisting on programming the latter's works at a time when critics still harboured serious doubts as to their creator's merits. Clara was often the first to play through Brahms's newest works, and we know from their correspondence that he took her critiques seriously. Clara's pupil Fanny Davies recalls that, "[Brahms] made it a rule never to publish a new work until he had heard it performed,"[300] and it certainly seems reasonable to assume that this familiarity with Clara's pianism had far-reaching implications for his compositional processes.

In viewing Clara as the muse, medium, and guardian of two such towering musical identities, contemporaneous discourse surrounding her artistic contributions tends to be dominated by rather chauvinistic themes, where "to have the honour of playing to Mozart and mending Beethoven's shirts [were] privileges which many a lady pianist might envy."[301] Many other accounts of Clara's personal and artistic qualities however, though similarly gendered, indeed establish her as an exemplar of deep physical and mental control. As one commentator notes, "[Clara's] wifely devotion...continued its touching manifestations through forty years of widowhood...Through all this...[she] passed unscathed, like some heaven-protected subject of the ordeal by fire."[302] So too does Fanny Davies describe Clara as having "not only acted as [Robert's] pioneer, but...like a chosen Priestess…[she] faithfully guarded the soul of his music."

---

[300] Fanny Davies, "Some Personal Recollections of Brahms as Pianist and Interpreter," *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, ed. W. W. Cobbett (London, 1929; 2nd edn. London, 1963), 182 - 84, in George S. Bozarth, "Fanny Davies and Brahms's Late Chamber Music," *Performing Brahms*, 173.

[301] "Miss Fanny Davies: A Biographical Sketch," *The Musical Times* 46, no. 748 (June 1, 1905): 365, accessed April 9, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/903439.

[302] "Clara Josephine Schumann," *TMTASCC* 37, no. 640 (June 1, 1896): 369, accessed April 18, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3368020.

Discussions of Clara's fidelity to Robert, itself an act of both mental and physical control, are often found alongside accounts of her opinions on issues of composer intent and textual adherence. For Clara, the soul of Robert's music was intimately tied to his notation, and Davies goes on to recall that her teacher often urged her pupils to "play what is written; play it *as* it is written…it all stands there."[303] Elsewhere it is reported that when attending Anton Rubinstein's concerts, Fanny Davies would follow along with her score noting all unnotated nuances of interpretation. When Clara performed however, it is said that "[Davies] needed no pencil, for she played everything exactly as it was written."[304] Clara's fidelity to canonic bodies in the flesh and on the page was also seen as a function of those other signifiers of mental control, intelligence and modesty:

> As the wife of one of the greatest composers since Beethoven, [Clara] might easily have been tempted to espouse with too much ardour her husband's cause…[but] Madame Schumann's character, intellect, and training saved her...By her modesty, prudence, and talents she has gradually achieved a veritable triumph...Though not her husband's sole disciple… [Clara] commands attention as one having special influence and authority…[as] the most faithful, the most earnest, and the most intelligent interpreter of Robert Schumann's pianoforte works.[305]

Clara's ability to modestly place her ample talents at the service of composer and music is further underlined by an 1867 review in which she is described as "foremost amongst the most intelligent living pianists," in whose playing "the design of the composer [is] never for one moment…lost in the whirlwind of passages requiring the

---

[303] Fanny Davies, "On Schumann: And Reading Between the Lines," *Music and Letters* (July 1925): 214, 215, accessed April 9, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/726684.
[304] "Miss Fanny Davies: A Biographical Sketch," *The Musical Times* (June 1, 1905): 366.
[305] "Madame Schumann" *TMTASCC* (April 1, 1884): 201.

utmost digital dexterity."[306] And as asserted on the occasion of her death in 1896, "[Clara] always played with care, intelligence, and feeling...she brought one as near to the composer as lay in her power."[307] Just as Clara was viewed as a link to Robert Schumann and Brahms's private and professional worlds, so too was her controlled mind and body the medium whereby audiences could encounter their works unencumbered by the intrusion of a performer's immodest personality and flashy technique.

As with Brahms, Clara's classicist pedigree and her devotion to the music of the past were often invoked as a critique of the ego-driven excesses of her more overtly Romantic contemporaries. As Fanny Davies polemicizes, "The Schumann tradition does not begin with Schumann! It begins with Bach, and goes on through Beethoven, and all the great Masters." Elsewhere Davies notes that, "there flowed, through Clara Schumann's art, the uninterrupted stream of the world's great musical traditions."[308] Clara's role as a physical and spiritual link to the musical geniuses of the past seems confirmed by obituary notices lamenting that her "bodily presence seemed to place us nearer the time...when the great ones walked our earth," and that her death "sever[ed] the last great remaining link that bound the music of the present with that of the past."[309] So too was Clara's passing framed as the end of an era of serious music making: "She lived

---

[306] "Monday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 13, no. 289 (March 1, 1867): 8, 13, accessed April 18, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3352655.
[307] "Clara Schumann," *The Academy* 49, no. 1252 (May 30, 1896): 454, accessed October 24, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/1298650908?accountid=16376.
[308] Davies, "On Schumann," *Music and Letters* (July 1925): 215; and "Miss Fanny Davies: A Biographical Sketch," *The Musical Times* (June 1, 1905): 369.
[309] "Clara Josephine Schumann," *TMTASCC* (June 1, 1896): 369; and "Madame Schumann," *The Manchester Guardian* (May 21, 1896): 6, accessed June 21, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/483290791?accountid=16376.

through the 'twilight of the gods' into the comparative night of our time…Let us recall...her uncompromising refusal to join in...'the Baal-worship of debased art.'"[310]

Other accounts link Clara to both the past and *future* of serious art, noting "the great interest which she has always taken in the development and progress of music," and that throughout her career she remained "faithful to the old masters, true to her husband's art-work, and generous to the productions of men of various styles and degrees of excellence."[311] Clara's fierce championing of one man however, often drew less sympathetic reactions: "[Clara] was narrow, intolerant, self-centred...[and] lived her life in a mutual admiration society of the smallest kind...'How sad it is there should be no one but Brahms whom one can look up to and admire as an artist.' That was her attitude to the world of living composers."[312] This intolerance may have been a function of her acute awareness of a performer's role in the construction of nascent canonic identities, as neither her husband nor Brahms enjoyed unanimous critical success during her lifetime:

> Critics, blinded by prejudice, spoke slightingly of [Clara's] husband's music; and in one influential quarter, and for obvious reasons, her great merits as a pianist were not properly recognized...[A]gainst an indifferent public and a cold, even hostile press, the only arms which Mme. Schumann used were a tender heart, a thinking head, and skilled fingers...hasten[ing] to some extent the hour of victory.[313]

---

[310] "Clara Josephine Schumann," *TMTASCC* (June 1, 1896): 369.
[311] "Madame Schumann," *TMTASCC* (April 1, 1884): 201.
[312] "The Greatness and Littleness of Clara Schumann," review of *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life,* by Berthold Litzmann, trans. Grace E. Hadow (MacMillan and Co., 1913) in *The Academy and Literature* 84, no. 2141 (May 10, 1913): 586, accessed October 24, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/1298691218?accountid=16376.
[313] "Clara Schumann," *The Academy* (May 30, 1896): 454.

Similarly, after an 1881 performance of Brahms's *Violin Sonata* Op. 78 it is reported that Clara "assured every possible advantage to a work which, though unequal in its merits, is not unworthy of the somewhat exaggerated reputation of its author."[314] Eager to distance the practices of the Schumann-Brahms circle from those of the New Germans, Clara actively promoted those composers and performers who shared her critical view of the emotional excesses and physical weaknesses of her Romanticist present: an advocacy that seems to have partly unfolded in her performance and teaching of Robert and Brahms's music. On the performance of the former's music, Fanny Davies recalls:

> Even in his wildest and most joyous moments he is never boisterous or vulgar...devoid of the least taint of melodrame, sentimentality, anecdotes and 'art'…We all know that the trend of today is rush and hurry, short cuts, machinery, commercialism, hectic speed, a great deal of superficiality… In order to read between Schumann's lines one must steadily refuse to let any one of these later influences poison one's power of interpretation.[315]

Davies's choice of the word 'poison' is naturally pertinent here. Recalling Clara's performance of her husband's *Piano Concerto in A minor* Op. 54 Davies notes that, "the solo was perfectly free, full of nuance, but without wrong ritenutos and sentimentality...Schumann's 'Allegro Affettuoso' is not an *affected* allegro." 'Affected' here might readily be interpreted as 'afflicted.' Remembering Clara's performance directions for Robert's *Romance in F sharp major* Op. 28, Davies further underlines

---

[314] "Monday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 22, no. 458 (April 1, 1881): 180, accessed April 18, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3358298.
[315] Fanny Davies, "On Schumann," (July 1925): 216.

Clara's distaste for melodrama, rush and hurry, only this time she explicitly invokes themes of the body and mind (Sound Ex. 3.1 and 3.2):

> [Clara's] direction was, for the first section, 'Innerlich ruhig' (keep quiet inside); and in the second section the feeling of pressing forward must never become obvious and thus degenerate into an accelerando...The emotional balance of the whole work must ever be repose - and the performer must be physically reposeful if he is to enter into the mental repose and convey that to the listener.[316]

In order to be able to communicate this inner and outer repose in performance, Clara's pupils received extensive coaching in the awareness and training of their physical apparatuses as pianists. As pupil Marie Fromm recalls:

> Long I struggled to make my fingers obedient in the scales and runs, and many tears I shed over the touch and tone-quality, for the old lady was an iron task-master...The very foundation of her training was that the arm must be absolutely loose, not a single muscle in upper or lower arm or wrist strained or forced, the fingers kept loose in the knuckle-joints, all power and quality coming from the back muscles...To bring the sinews under delicate control...is a long and difficult process.[317]

Clara's students were then expected to put this control to use in the careful delineation of the tonal, textural, rhythmic and structural features of musical

---

[316] Davies, "On Schumann," *Music and Letters* (July 1925): 216, 222. Emphasis mine. Clara's pupil Adelina de Lara demonstrates these qualities quite beautifully in her 1952 recording of the *Romance* Op. 28 no. 2, as heard in sound example 3.1. Note the relative temporal stability of the A section as opposed to the elasticity of the B section. Another of Clara's pupils however, Carl Friedberg, recorded the same work in 1953, and his solemn performance as heard in sound example 3.2 is even more temporally and emotionally restrained than de Lara's, whose playing seems quite lilting and restless by comparison.

[317] Marie Fromm, "Some Reminiscences of My Music Studies with Clara Schumann," *The Musical Times* 73, no. 1073 (July 1, 1932): 615, accessed October 24, 2013, http://www.jstor.org.access.authkb.kb.nl/stable/918290.

compositions. In reference to the voicing of polyphonic textures, Fanny Davies remembers how Clara emphasized "the importance of playing chords in a way that will convey to the hearer the significance of the harmonies therein contained."[318] On matters of rhythmic detail, Clara is reported to have paid "almost incredible attention to the minutest value of every note she played,"[319] corroborating Davies's recollection that she often emphasized "Das 'Getragene': the giving of full value to the inner voices (but never to the detriment of the whole picture); [and] the giving of full value to the basses."[320] According to Davies, Clara's meticulous attention to local detail served to reveal rather than obscure large-scale musical structure, for "like all great artists [Clara] demanded the subordination of detail to the spirit of the whole."

Clara's students were also expected to cultivate something of her legendary tone, touch and legato playing. As Fanny Davies continues, Clara insisted that they "acquire the command of a pure *legato*, even in the most rapid passages...to produce beauty of tone and repose."[321] Clara's daughter Eugenie recalls how her mother could make "the legato of the melody hove[r] above that of the bass," and that Brahms's piano pieces were "plastic creations, glowing with life and tenderness" [322] in her hands: statements that both seem to imply a certain flexibility of rhythm, whereby time and space are needed to produce the tone quality Clara sought. Another pupil describes Clara's tone as clear, full

---

[318] Fanny Davies and Frederick Corder, "Robert Schumann: About Schumann's Pianoforte Music," *The Musical Times* 51, no. 810 (August 1, 1910): 493, accessed April 9, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/908084.
[319] "The Greatness and Littleness of Clara Schumann," *The Academy and Literature* (May 10, 1913): 585.
[320] Davies and Corder, "Robert Schumann," *The Musical Times* (August 1, 1910): 494.
[321] "Miss Fanny Davies: A Biographical Sketch," *The Musical Times* (June 1, 1905): 369 - 70.
[322] E. Schumann, *Erinnerungen*, 195 - 96, in Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance* (London: CHARM, 2009), chapter 6, paragraph 9, www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap6.html.

and warm, with a carrying quality "which made every melody ring out like a song."[323] The song-like nature of Clara's touch and tone seems corroborated by one of Brahms's inscriptions: "To Frau Klara Schumann, the greatest singer," referring to the way her tone and touch "conveyed like a beautiful human voice every shade of emotion."[324] Much like her insistence on 'keeping quiet inside' in matters of expression, tempo and technique, so too was Clara's tone and touch rooted in deep mental and physical poise, or 'hineinlegen' (to put inside), as Davies explains:

> The meaning of the word cannot be realised by technique alone. It suggests something spiritual and emotional, and demands the right touch on the pianoforte, and...[has] behind it the warmth of human affection such as is conveyed by the pressure of a hand one loves...[and] does not mean extreme digging into the keys in order to produce a 'warm' tone.[325]

Davies's account here might explain contemporaneous descriptions of Clara's 'covered' technique, whereby the "beautiful quality of tone she produced...was obtained by pressure with the fingers rather than by percussion...[T]he fingers were kept close to the keys and squeezed instead of striking them."[326] This technique may certainly have facilitated Clara's ability to become a disappearing agent in the transmission of musical works, for when sounds are drawn from the instrument in such a way that the hands

---

[323] Eva Ducat, "Conversations with Ilona Derenburg (née Eibenschütz)," unpublished transcript, Eibenschutz file, *International Piano Archives at Maryland* (IPAM), in Kathleen Rountree, "The short-lived career of Ilona Eibenschütz," *The American Music Teacher* 43, no. 5 (April 1994): 14, accessed May 13, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/217451599?accountid=16376.
[324] E. Schumann, *Erinnerungen*, 195 - 96, in Leech-Wilkinson, *Changing Sound of Music,* chapter 6, paragraph 9.
[325] Davies and Corder, "Robert Schumann," *The Musical Times* (August 1, 1910): 494.
[326] Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 294, in Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music*, chapter 6, paragraph 9.

rarely leave the keys, the physical extension of a pianist and the mechanism of their instrument recede while the 'work' performed is allowed to assume a central focus. When the keys are struck vertically from above, suddenly a performer's body and instrument come into view, and the 'work' becomes a vehicle for personality, technique and tool. As Fanny Davies recalls, Clara often insisted that in performance one should "never to think too much of the instrument and too little of the music."[327]

That Clara's 'covered' technique is mentioned at all perhaps evidences its peculiarity as compared to that of a new class of professional virtuosos with more vertical and percussive techniques designed to project the expressive and technical capabilities of performers and instruments alike. Clara's "pure and classical form of pianoforte playing"[328] seems to have been remarkable and even old-fashioned for its connection to historical keyboard techniques in general, and with Mendelssohn in particular. As observed after an 1867 performance of Beethoven's *Sonata in D minor* Op. 31 no. 2:

> The alternation of *Adagio* and *Allegro* in the first movement...can be readily played precisely as Beethoven has written them; but the power of sympathizing with the composer so as to re-produce his varied phrases of thought as he spoke and felt in the language he had chosen, belongs only to that order of genius of which Mendelssohn was the brightest example, and to which Madame Schumann...may fairly lay claim.[329]

---

[327] "Miss Fanny Davies: A Biographical Sketch," *The Musical Times* (June 1, 1905): 370.
[328] "Crystal Palace," *TMTASCC* 28, no. 530 (April 1, 1887): 215, accessed April 18, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3359796.
[329] "Monday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* (March 1, 1867): 8, 13. The original review claims that Clara performed Beethoven's Sonata 'in D minor, no. 2, Op. 29,' but Op. 29 is the String Quintet in C major. The only Piano Sonata in D minor is that of Op. 31 no. 2, and it indeed features alternating recitativo Adagio and Allegro passages in its opening movement.

This Mendelssohn-like element in Clara's playing is again noticed in 1884 when it is observed that, "If we think of Emanuel Bach and Mozart, of Hummel [and] Mendelssohn...we are reminded of a pure and noble style of pianoforte playing, of which...Madame Schumann may be considered the last representative."[330] As implied by the review of her Beethoven performance, Clara's 'pure and noble' style of playing in a way 'sympathetic' to composers probably involved expressive deviations from their texts.

Neal Peres Da Costa's discussion of a 'Leipzig' style of playing as related to a Mendelssohn tradition in the late-Romantic period might be helpful here. In 1904 the *Zeitschrift für Instrumentenbau* in Leipzig heralded Carl Reinecke as "the greatest and most conscientious performer of Mozart" living at the time, asserting that his forthcoming roll recordings of the complete Mozart piano sonatas would preserve "the style of the famous Leipzig Mozart-Players for posterity." According to Da Costa, "Reinecke was a representative of a particular style of playing Mozart that made use of arpeggiation, dislocation, and many other techniques...a tradition going back to Mendelssohn." Reinecke's pupil Julius Röntgen is also reported to have been known for his "ability to give himself unreservedly to a work's emotional content...[and] commune with its creator," as well as for his 'Leipzig' manner: the "arpeggio execution of chords and the delaying of thematic notes in the right hand."[331] If Röntgen's concern for the intentions of composers and his use of unnotated expressive devices are all associated with some 'Leipzig' manner of interpretation going back to Mendelssohn, then perhaps Clara's playing bore similar characteristics as well.

---

[330] "Madame Schumann," *TMTASCC* (April 1, 1884): 201.

[331] Anonymous, "Altmeister Karl Reinecke und das Pianola," *Zeitschrift für Instrumentenbau* (September 11, 1904): 1039; Carl Flesch, *The Memoirs of Carl Flesch*, ed. Hans Keller and Carl Flesch, trans. Hans Keller (London: Rockliff, 1957), 215, in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 162. According to Da Costa, Reinecke's roll recording project was left unfinished.

While Clara's performance approach likely included arpeggiation, dislocation and a certain amount of tempo flexibility, these elements rarely find their way into modern distillations of the essentials of her style. In *Performing Brahms* Michael Musgrave offers one such summation, adapted from the recollections of Clara's pupil Adelina de Lara:

> She stresses first and above all Clara's requirement 'to be truthful to the composer's meaning, to emphasize every beauty in the composition,' which implies the thorough study of and knowledge of the score. She required constant attention to tone, rhythm, and phrasing - each phrase as though it were given to a musical instrument. She required tempos proper to the music. She was extremely averse to speed and thought it the curse of modern performance: 'keine Passagen' (no passagework) was her expression, referring to the routine rushing through figurations for brilliance of effect.[332]

It is easy to see why notions of a unified Schumann-Brahms school of pianism have been built around this Clara 'ideal.' Everything about her described performance ideology implies deep mental and physical control: her hyperawareness of how performance style signifies things about composers; her insistence on the cultivation of inner and outer poise; her eschewal of the poisons of over-sentimentalizing and the degeneracy of virtuosic display; her textual fidelity and her willingness to place mind, body and instrument at the service of the composer; and her emphasis on the careful delineation of detail and structure through 'hineinlegen,' 'Das Getragene' and 'Innerlich ruhig.' While none of this suggests that Clara played in a way that we would recognize as controlled or even literal today, it does however seem to offer ample evidence that her performance ideology was rooted in expressive and technical restraint. As such, Clara's

[332] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 316, from De Lara, *Finale* (London, 1955), 55.

described performance style sits rather comfortably beside the precepts of contemporary Brahms style and its underlying aesthetic ideology.

3.3) Brahms and the Clara 'Ideal'

Efforts to align Clara's pianism with Brahms's are likely buttressed by knowledge of her intimacy with his private and professional life on one hand, and by the palatability of her performance style with regards to the aesthetic ideology of mental and physical control on the other. Like Clara, assertions of Brahms's control at the keyboard are often found in descriptions of the "matchless beauty, clarity, weight and richness"[333] of his tone, touch and legato playing. In an account reminiscent of descriptions of the vocal nature of Clara's tone and touch, Robert Schumann reports that Brahms was "a player of genius who can make of the piano an orchestra of lamenting and loudly jubilant voices. There were...songs, the poetry of which would be understood even without words…[and] a profound vocal melody runs through them all."[334]

While both Clara's and Brahms's tonal palettes are described as beautiful, varied and warm, Brahms's seems to have also been *powerful*, though never noisy. Albert Dietrich recalls that Brahms played with "wonderful power and mastery," while Fanny Davies remembers that, "his touch could be warm, deep, full, and broad in the *fortes*, and not hard, even in the *fortissimos*; and his *pianos*, always of carrying power, could be as round and transparent as a dewdrop." Hanslick too underlines the inner power of Brahms's tone production in his observation that, "the forceful and the distorted are thus simply impossible in Brahms's playing...he seems reluctant to draw a full tone from the piano"; while Rudolf von der Leyen remembers that, "force as such had no place in

[333] Von Bülow, *Briefe*, 6, 98, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 125.
[334] Schumann, "Neue Bahnen," *NZfM* 39, no. 18 (28 October, 1853): 185 - 86, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 121.

[Brahms's] playing...he never demanded more of an instrument than it was capable of giving without overstepping the bounds of artistic beauty."[335]

Like Clara, this restraint seems to have enabled Brahms to place his mind and body at the service of composer and text in performance. In an account echoing Clara's insistence on 'emphasizing every beauty in the composition,' Brahms's pupil Florence May recalls that, "he never aimed at mere effect, but seemed to plunge into the innermost meaning of whatever music he happened to be interpreting, exhibiting all its details and expressing its very depths."[336] This elucidation of detail seems to have been facilitated by Brahms's careful voicing of textural complexities. As his pupil Ethel Smyth reports, "when lifting a submerged theme out of the tangle of music he used jokingly to ask us to admire the gentle sonority of his 'tenor thumb'," while Fanny Davies recalls that, "Brahms played with unbelievable transparency of touch, elegance, simplicity and ease of phrasing...g[iving] out the melodic line very beautifully with the thumb or little finger – not declaiming it, but putting it very clearly and elegantly." Like Clara's insistence on the primacy of musical meaning however, May recalls that, "neatness and equality of finger were imperatively demanded...as a preparation, not as an end. Varying and sensitive expression was to [Brahms]...necessary to the true interpretation of any work."[337]

---

[335] Albert Dietrich, *Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms, besonders aus seiner Jugendzeit* (Leipzig, 1899), 2 - 3 in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 122; Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 182 - 84, in Bozarth, "Fanny Davies and Brahms's Late Chamber Music," *Performing Brahms*, 172; Eduard Hanslick, *Aus dem Konzertsaal, Kritik und Schilderungen, 1848 - 1868* (Vienna, 1897), 288 - 90, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 122; and Rudolf von der Leyen, *Johannes Brahms als Mensch und Freund* (Düsseldorf, 1905), 61, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 124.

[336] Florence May, *The Life of Brahms*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (London, 1948), I: 21, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 123.

[337] Ethel Smyth, *Impressions that Remained*, 2 vols. (London, 1919), I: 266, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 124; Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 182 - 84, in Bozarth, *Performing Brahms*, 174; and May, *Johannes Brahms*, I: 18 - 19, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 130.

Alongside descriptions of Brahms's careful 'playing' of detail are accounts of his powerful basses in performance. As Fanny Davies remembers, "one could hear that he listened very intently to the inner harmonies, and of course he laid great stress on good basses," while after the premiere of the revised *Trio in B* Op. 8 Max Graf reports that, "Brahms...as usual introduced thundering basses. Upon this ponderous structure a magnificent and uniform building was erected." Echoing Clara's insistence on the 'subordination of detail to the spirit of the whole,' Brahms's booming bass lines framed a necessary architectural foundation for his intricate textural designs: an approach to playing detail *and* structure that becomes explicitly allied to the trope of mental and physical fitness, as Graf continues:

> [Brahms's] playing was devoid of the complicated shading and nuances of colours which characterize players of the Liszt school. He was simple and strong. There was spiritual and musical potency in his playing - no nervous over-sensitiveness running amuck in hundreds of little colour patches. When Brahms played, the design was important and not the colours themselves.[338]

There is also evidence that Brahms shared Clara's 'covered' approach to tone production and 'hineinlegen,' whereby sound was coaxed from the inside-out rather than struck from above. Adelina de Lara recalls that, "[Brahms's] hands seemed to rest quietly on the keyboard and brought out a depth and volume of tone, even in the most quiet *pp,*" while Hanslick reports that the composer "[shook] octave passages from a relaxed wrist in such a way that the keys are brushed sideways, rather than struck squarely from

[338] Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 182 - 84, in Bozarth, *Performing Brahms*, 172; and Max Graf, *Legend of a Musical City* (New York, 1945; repr. New York, 1969), 105, 103, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 134, 136.

above."[339] In Bruce Hungerford's transcriptions of lessons with Carl Friedberg, Friedberg asserts that in Brahms's piano music, "legato is something you get in the best way if you play...as if you were sorry to leave the tone you just struck…just drawing it out slow. Like a snail…No leg-lifting." Echoing descriptions of Clara's 'hovering legato,' elsewhere Friedberg remarks, "Don't think too much pianistic motion. Just lay your hands on the keys…[so] the melody hangs like spider webs in the air."[340] On Carl Friedberg's teaching of Brahms's piano music in general, Hungerford summarizes:

> One aspect of [Brahms's] playing, which impressed Carl Friedberg perhaps more than any other...was the ever apparent endeavour on the part of the master to make the piano sound not like a piano - a percussive device - but rather to mould and knead phrases, so that the music sounded as though invoked from the instrument, not punched into it... Brahms's playing gave an impression of great power, but it was more a power from within rather than brute force from without.[341]

As with descriptions of Clara's literal and self-effacing performance approach, references to Brahms's mental control also invoke themes of devotion and modesty, especially as related to a performer's deference to the intentions of composers and the statuses of their texts. As Hanslick reports, "[Brahms] only wishes to serve the composition, and he avoids almost to the point of shyness any semblance or suggestion of self-importance or show," and that, "prompted by the desire to let the composer speak for himself, [Brahms's]…playing resembles the austere Cordelia, who concealed her finest

---

[339] De Lara, *Finale*, 49; Hanslick, *Aus dem Konzertsaal,* 288 - 90; in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 122 - 23.
[340] DiClemente, "Brahms Performance Practice," 61, 66 from Transcript, 226, 282.
[341] Bruce Hungerford, "Carl Friedberg: Impressions of a Great Artist," date unknown, from the Bruce Hungerford and Carl Friedberg Collections at IPAM, in DiClemente, "Brahms Performance Practice," 88.

feelings rather than betray them to the people."[342] Brahms is also known to have remarked, "When I play something by Beethoven, I have absolutely no individuality in relation to it; rather I try to reproduce the piece as well as Beethoven wrote it. Then I have (quite) enough to do."[343]

One wonders how closely this might relate to accounts of Clara's ability to play Beethoven 'as he thought and felt it' in her Mendelssohn-like 'Leipzig manner': an approach that seems to have included the use of unnotated expressive devices such as arpeggiation, dislocation and tempo flexibility. Florence May recalls a lesson in which Brahms asserted that Mozart's sonata should be played with 'sustained feeling' and a 'deep legato touch,' rather than in a straight and light way. After she expressed her shock, Brahms replied, "'it is all there,' pointing to the book." As May continues:

> [Brahms's] interpretation of Bach was always unconventional...and he certainly did not share the opinion, which has had many distinguished adherents, that Bach's music should be performed in a simply flowing style...he liked variety of tone and touch, as well as a certain elasticity of tempo…and he performed them not only with graduated shadings but with marked contrasts of tone effect...[and] with *feeling* of some kind or other.[344]

May's use of the word 'feeling' in both statements seems related to her reference to 'elasticity of tempo.' So too does Fanny Davies recall that, "The sign <>, as used by Brahms, often occurs when he wishes to express great sincerity and warmth, allied not only to tone but to rhythm also. He would linger not on one note alone, but on a whole

---

[342] Hanslick, *Aus dem Konzertsaal,* 288 - 290, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 122.
[343] Heinrich Schenker, L. van Beethoven, *Die letzen [funf] Sonaten von Beethoven: Kritische Ausgabe mit Einführung und Erläuterung* [Op. 110] (Vienna, 1913 - 21), 78, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 130.
[344] May, *Brahms*, I: 17 - 18, 69, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 128 - 29. Emphasis mine.

idea... prefer[ring] to lengthen a bar or phrase rather than spoil it by making up the time into a metronomic bar." Davies also remembers that, "Brahms's manner of interpretation was free, very elastic and expansive...[but] the balance was always there – one felt the fundamental rhythms underlying the surface rhythms," and that he "beg[an] phrases well, ends them well, leaves plenty of space between the end of one and the beginning of another, and yet joins them without any hiatus."[345]

Taken together, descriptions such as these suggest a few important things about Brahms's unnotated tempo modifications: first, they were used in order to relax rather than hasten temporal motion; secondly, they never subverted the sense of a basic, underlying pulse; thirdly, they were prompted on a local level by notated elements like hairpins, phrases, and particularly beautiful melodic, harmonic and rhythmic details; and fourthly, they functioned to delineate the apexes and outer boundaries of larger musical structures. This delineation of both detail and structure through the holding back of tempo certainly echoes Clara's insistence on 'Innerlich ruhig' (keep quiet inside), 'Das Getragene' (giving notes their full value though not to the detriment of the whole), and 'keine Passagen' (no rushing).

Further support for Brahms's use of time to create repose rather than 'rush and hurry' is found in Adelina de Lara's recollection that after playing Brahms's *Scherzo in E flat minor*, the composer exclaimed, "No, no, it is too fast, you must draw it out more, like this."[346] Similarly, Fanny Davies observes that in Brahms's performance of the *Presto non assai* second movement of his *Trio in C Minor* Op. 101, "What one usually hears is 'presto.' What one heard from Brahms was 'non assai.'" Elsewhere Davies

[345] Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 182 - 84, in Bozarth, *Performing Brahms*, 172.
[346] De Lara, *Finale*, 49, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 126.

remembers that, "His phrasing was notable in lyric passages. In these a strictly metronomic Brahms is as unthinkable as a fussy or hurried Brahms in passages which must be presented with adamantine rhythm."[347] Taken together, these accounts suggest that Brahms played quite steadily though not too quickly in up-tempo material, and quite flexibly though not too slowly in more lyrical material. Indeed, as Davies laments in reference to twentieth-century Brahms performance practice, "the tendency is usually to play the Andantes too slowly, and the quick movements, scherzos, etc., too quickly."[348]

As in Davies's account just above, themes of control are often implied in observations of changing approaches to Brahmsian tempo. Violinist Franz Kneisel reports that Brahms once asked, "Would you please do me the favour of not taking that too fast?"; Carl Friedberg is known to have instructed Julliard students that, "for Brahms, one could never play slowly enough"; and Max Rudolf remembers that, "[Brahms] would not have approved of the rushed tempi we now sometimes hear. His music making was relaxed."[349] The implication here is that there is an approach to Brahmsian tempo that is 'just right,' in that it best reveals the most essential features of his compositions: features assumed to be detail and structure. As Davies asserts, "All Brahms's passages, if one can call them passages, are strings of gems, and that tempo which can best reveal these gems and help to characterize the detail at the same time as the outlines of a great work must be

---

[347] Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 182 - 84, in Bozarth, *Performing Brahms* 172, 174.
[348] De Lara, *Finale*, 49, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 126; and Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 182 - 84, in Bozarth, *Performing Brahms* 172, 174, 176.
[349] R. H. Schauffler, *The Unknown Brahms* (New York, 1933), 411; Bernard D. Sherman, in conversations with violist Emmanuel Vardi who studied with Friedberg; and M. Rudolf, *The Grammar of Conducting* (2nd edn. New York, 1980), 359; in Bernard D. Sherman, "Metronome Markings, Timings, and Other Period Evidence," *Performing Brahms*, 112 - 13.

considered the *right* tempo."[350] Davies's hesitation to use the word 'passages' here might stem from Clara's admonition 'keine Passagen!'

On the use of other unnotated expressive devices, Florence May recalls that Brahms "particularly disliked chords to be spread unless marked so by the composer for the sake of special effect. 'No arpège,' he used invariably to say if I unconsciously gave way to the habit, or yielded to the temptation of softening a chord by its means." While elsewhere it is reported that Brahms "arpeggiated all chords" and was once criticized for his "'incessant spreading of chords in the slower tempos,"[351] it is generally believed that teachers impart their 'best practice' to students. May's account certainly implies that, much like choosing 'the right' tempo, so too was the temptation of arpeggiating chords something to be regimented - even if Brahms didn't always practice what he preached.

Michael Musgrave summarizes Brahms's described performance style as having been characterized by a distinctive rhythm and attack, the quality and variety of his tone, and his awareness of the importance of tempo as related to interpretation and spirit.[352] To this framework perhaps we might add a covered technique, singing legato tone and powerful basses; the fastidious delineation of rhythmic and textural detail, though not to the detriment of the whole; an approach to expressive tempo modifications dominated by a holding back of tempo rather than a hastening; and the regimented use of all other unnotated expressive devices in order to emphasize musical detail and structure.

---

[350] Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 182 - 84, in Bozarth, *Performing Brahms*, 176. Emphasis mine.
[351] May, *Johannes Brahms*, I, 18; Richard Hudson, *Stolen Time: The History of Tempo Rubato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 333; and H. Kroenlein, "Konzertbericht," *Karlsruher Zeitung* (Nov. 9, 1865) in Anselm Gerhard, "Willkürliches Arpeggieren," *Basler Jahrbuch für Historische Musikpraxis* 27 (2003): 123; in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 139.
[352] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 302.

When Brahms is reported to have fallen short of this controlled ideal, it is almost always framed as a function of his transition from a youthful pianist who performed other composers' works to an aged composer whose works were performed by others. As Fanny Davies recalls, "In the years during which I heard him (1884-96), Brahms had long ceased to practice regularly, and when one has reached the age of fifty, one's fingers are not apt to improve unless used constantly." As we have already seen, Clara too had serious reservations about Brahms's later playing, remarking that, "[he] plays more and more abominably - it's now nothing but thump, bang and scrabble." In addition to ageing and his negligence of practicing, reports of Brahms's tendency to play "more like a composer than a virtuoso" perhaps again evidence a growing chasm in performance standards between an older class of composer-pianists and a newer breed of professional virtuosos. As Marie Schumann observes, "In later years [Brahms] hardly ever played anything except his own compositions - when it didn't matter whether he reached technical perfection or not."[353]

Among the symptoms of Brahms's deteriorated later technique were a harshness of tone and an abundance of wrong notes, resulting in the impression that his performances were akin to what Marie Schumann calls a "spirited sketch," whereby he would reduce compositions to their barest essentials. While we have already seen Charles Stanford's recollection that when he heard Brahms perform in 1880, "The skips...were accomplished regardless of accuracy, and it is no exaggeration to say that there were handfuls of wrong notes," Stanford goes on to remark that, "The touch was somewhat

[353] Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 182 - 84, in Bozarth, *Performing Brahms*, 173; *Clara Schumann: ein Künstlerleben,* III: 441, in Robert Philip, "Brahms's Musical World: Balancing the Evidence," in *Performing Brahms,* 351; Hanslick, *Aus dem Konzertsaal*, 288, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 126; and E. Schumann, *Erinnerungen*, 269, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 125.

hard and lacking in force-control; it was at its best in the slow movement, where he produced the true velvety quality, probably because he was not so hampered by his own difficulties."[354] Brahms's later shortcomings aside however, many scholars proceed to evaluate whether his 1889 cylinder recording of an excerpt from his *Hungarian Dance No. 1 in G minor* matches descriptions of his performance style: a process that as Michael Musgrave asserts, should be undertaken with extreme caution:

> Most descriptions come from later years when he took even less trouble with his playing. Many other descriptions imply that his technical vulnerability led to performances that [were] exaggerated...Thus, though descriptions of his best qualities are invaluable to us in relation to the score, not every feature [is] worth imitating. Rather, features must be taken as representing inclinations or trends.[355]

If Brahms's best qualities are invaluable in relation to his scores, then the first issue to tackle is reconciling his recorded performance with his notation. (Sound Ex. 3.3) Musgrave suggests that the genre of the *Hungarian Dance* might offer one possible explanation for his many departures from the score, asserting that, "Brahms's scores embody everything he wanted...Yet his recording... show[s] freedoms from the score that were obviously expected...The key issue is of course, 'how free is free and how strict is strict' - and in what *kinds* of pieces?"[356] Neal Peres Da Costa also looks to genre in his attempt to resolve conflicting descriptions of Brahms's frequent use of arpeggiation with his rather restrained use of the device on the recording, suggesting that, "[Brahms] may

---

[354] Stanford, *Pages,* 200, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 125.
[355] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 323.
[356] May, *Johannes Brahms*, I: 18, in Ibid., 323. Emphasis is mine.

have chosen to arpeggiate less frequently than usual considering the strongly accented character of the *Hungarian Dance.*"[357]

Where the elements of Brahms's approach cannot be explained by genre alone, many will then adopt a score-based approach, whereby a performer's textual departures are assumed to be prompted by the notated elements of scores, with the intention of delineating the most important features of those scores: namely, detail and structure. George S. Bozarth cites Will Crutchfield's observation that Brahms uses dislocation "on just about all the accented first beats where the texture is melody/accompaniment [but] never on big accented chords"[358]: a practice that certainly echoes descriptions of Brahms's attention to detail and his emphasis of the outer boundaries of phrases. Musgrave observes that Brahms modifies the dotted quarter-eighth pattern of the main idea to two quarters to emphasize the ends of phrases, and that the contrasting *leggiero* section is taken more quickly providing structural contrast between sections. Though Brahms's local rhythmic alterations and larger temporal modifications serve to emphasize detail and structure in a practice Musgrave calls "'structural shaping,' in the sense of unveiling the essential features of the composition by these means," elsewhere he suggests that they might simply be a "hasty if enthusiastic response to the recording medium."[359]

Neal Peres Da Costa notes Crutchfield's observation that the "runs are played at a notably increased tempo...creating a dashing effect" in Brahms's performance, and that "the final cadence...is tossed off with a fiery snap, faster yet than the tempo of the

---

[357] Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 140.
[358] Crutchfield, "Brahms," 14, in Bozarth, *Performing Brahms*, 194 (note 20).
[359] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 307, 305.

runs."[360] For context, Da Costa cites Fanny Davies's observation that in Brahms's performance of the *Trio in C Minor* Op. 101 a *poco stringendo* marking resulted in an increase of tempo from 76MM to 120MM. In Davies's example however, Brahms's rushing is in direct response to notation and occurs over a restricted range of musical material, while the rushed passages Crutchfield describes do not coincide with an indication to rush, nor do they emphasize detail and structure in the same way as Brahms's quicker tempo in the *leggiero* section. Perhaps this prompts Da Costa to advocate for a cautionary approach, noting that while "tempo flexibility appears to have been an indispensable aspect of 'Brahmsian' style...the boundaries within which this flexibility took place remain relatively unclear."[361]

When comparing Brahms's described and recorded performance style, the trope of 'reasonable doubt' seems to be a particularly pressing one. Few performer-scholars are aware of the extent to which verbal accounts of Brahms's pianism have been selected according to their compatibility with descriptions of Clara's hyper-controlled elucidation of musical detail and structure, and that it is thus against this Clara ideal that we judge Brahms. Though very real and sounding, those features of Brahms's recorded style that are less compatible with the Clara ideal are instead ignored, sanitized, or framed as mere possibilities within a range of other imaginary and more palatable options, ensuring that notions of a unified Schumann-Brahms school of pianism remain safely intact. Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to imagine the spirit of Brahms's recording from Musgrave's distillation of the essentials of his described and recorded style: essentials that seem to

[360] Crutchfield, "Brahms," 14, in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 266 - 67, 268.
[361] Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 184, in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 264 - 65.

have much more in common with descriptions of Clara's playing than they do with the sounding evidence itself:

> A strong sense of the basic musical structure, with strong beginnings and ends of passages, yet an awareness of the distinctive ideas or digressions within them, though not to the detriment of the overall shape; varieties of touch and tone...whether strongly marked or veiled, but always warm, rounded and distinctive; and a strongly rhythmic character where appropriate.[362]

Efforts to evaluate the Brahmsian authority of Clara's pupils tend to proceed in a similar manner, the logic being that if Clara's pianism indeed 'has equal relevance to Brahms' as contended by the summary above (and many others like it), then the playing of her pupils (if they can be shown to be faithful representatives of her method) should say something about Brahms's playing as well.

[362] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 307.

3.4) The Schumann-Brahms Pupils

Much has been written about the problems inherent in reconstructing a teacher's performance style from those of their pupils, and for good reason. As Leech-Wilkinson asserts, "family trees tell us no more about the behaviour and tastes of our ancestors than they do about piano teachers," while Will Crutchfield suggests that performance style changes in the first place because students tend to "react to their teachers in myriad ways that are imitative and rebellious…their playing reflects the progressive style of...the new virtuosi on the block."[363] Given Clara's critical attitude towards the practices of pianists outside her circle however, it is likely that her pupils - as compared to Liszt or Rubinstein's for example - were particularly discouraged from playing 'like the new virtuosi on the block.' Perhaps what can be said is that the pianism of her students might evidence a range within which she expected to hear the music of Schumann and Brahms performed: men in whose canonic identities she was so personally invested, and for whom her pupils would also be seen as representatives.

Amina Goodwin (1867-1942) is described in 1910 as "an ardent Schumannite who studied the longest under Clara Schumann,"[364] and echoes of the precepts of Clara's teaching are found throughout reviews of her performances. In 1882 it is observed that, "her touch is crisp and firm, her gradations of tone are legitimately produced, and her technique generally of remarkable excellence," while two years later it is asserted that it

---

[363] Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music,* chapter 6, paragraph 7; Crutchfield, "Brahms," 14; in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, xxxiii.
[364] "Miscellaneous Intelligence," *The Musical Times* 51, no. 805 (March 1, 1910): 184, accessed July 22, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/906763.

was the "thorough appreciation of the composer's meaning which gave finish and character to her play."[365] Referencing Goodwin's poise in performance, one reviewer comments that he could not "remember a time when [she] displayed the slightest nervousness," and that on the night in question she was "as cool and collected as ever."[366] Goodwin made a series of chamber music recordings in 1904 with the London Trio, and her playing on a track entitled 'Mendelssohn: Scherzo' found on CHARM's online Discography features fluidly brilliant passagework, a delicately crisp tone and attack, and a restrained approach to the use of unnotated expressive devices.[367]

Nathalie Janotha (1856-1932) is reported to have played "exactly like Clara Schumann": playing described by George Bernard Shaw as suggestive, poetic, and nobly beautiful.[368] Her 1904 recording of Chopin's *Fugue in A Minor,* B. 114 features an improvised introduction, dislocations and local rhythmic alterations, and some rubato playing before the reiteration of the main theme and later to prepare a trilled dominant pedal point (Sound Ex. 3.4). While Janotha's playing of Chopin's fugue has a slightly lilting and restless quality much like Adelina De Lara's recording of Schumann's *Romance* Op. 28, her recording of Mendelssohn's 'Spinning Song' in C major from the *Sechs Lieder ohne Worte* Op. 67 (Sound Ex. 3.5), though taken at a break-neck speed, is

---

[365] "Music in Manchester," *TMTASCC* 23, no. 468 (February 1, 1882): 83, accessed July 22, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3358566; and "Miss Amina Goodwin's Classical Chamber Concert," *The Manchester Guardian* (January 8, 1884): 8, accessed October 23, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/479222240?accountid=16376.
[366] "Amina Goodwin's Concert," *The Manchester Guardian* (January 17, 1882): 5, accessed July 9, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/478999526?accountid=16376.
[367] Goodwin's performance with The London Trio can be searched in the CHARM discography by entering 'Mendelssohn' under composer and 'Goodwin' under performer in the 'simple search' function. http://www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/discography/search/disco_search.html
[368] Amy Fay, *Music-Study in Germany from the Home Correspondence of Amy Fay* (New York: Macmillan, 1896), 300; George Bernard Shaw, *Shaw's Music*, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: Bodley Press, 1981), I: 639; in Leech-Wilkinson, *Changing Sound of Music,* chapter 6, paragraph 11.

quite temporally steady and evidences a much more restrained use of local rhythmic alterations and dislocation. As in the fugue, her playing here features an improvised introduction, as well as some dramatic *rubato* playing and an extended improvised flourish before the final reiteration of the main theme: qualities that in both performances could be said to emphasize major structural boundaries.

Leonard Borwick (1868-1925) became known as one of the few "English players...endowed in a rare measure with [Clara's]…exquisitely sympathetic touch and her wondrous ability of phrasing."[369] Echoing her emphasis on the elucidation of detail and structure, Borwick is reported to have "played with a fine sense of proportion that made its component parts distinct enough in themselves, yet very tangibly dominated by the feeling of the unity of the work as a whole." Though he could reportedly be "technically and intellectually perfect, though perhaps a little cold,"[370] observers sympathetic to the anti-New German polemics of the Brahms-Schumann circle probably viewed this austerity as a positive expression of control. Indeed, throughout Borwick's reviews one finds references to his 'chaste expression,' his 'Anglo-Saxon mind,' his 'perfect clearness and masculine vigour,' his 'splendid sanity' and his 'sound and wholesome' approach: themes with clear psychological and physical implications.[371]

---

[369] "Madame Schumann," *The Manchester Guardian* (May 21, 1896): 6.

[370] "Leonard Borwick Plays: English Pianist Again Makes a Deep Impression," *New York Times* (December 9, 1914): 13, accessed October 23, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/97558007?accountid=16376; and "Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 36, no. 624 (February 1, 1895): 97, accessed May 11, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3364044.

[371] "Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 31, no. 574 (December 1, 1890): 730, accessed July 18, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3362039; "Music of the Week: The Playing of Mr. Leonard Borwick," *The Observer* (February 13, 1921): 10, accessed October 23, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/480788506?accountid=16376; "Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 34, no. 601 (March 1, 1893): 151, accessed May 11, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3363023; H. P. Greene, "Leonard Borwick: Some Personal Recollections," *Music and Letters* 7, no. 1 (January 1, 1926): 17, accessed October 23, 2013,

Despite being credited on a number of recordings featuring baritone Harry Plunkett Greene, it seems that sadly Leonard Borwick left no recordings.

After Clara's pupil Carl Friedberg (1872-1955) gave an all-Brahms recital in Vienna, the composer reportedly sought him out afterwards and declared, "It was lovely, the way you played." The two stayed out together that evening until 6am, at which time Brahms invited Friedberg back to his house where he proceeded to play most of his piano works for the young man.[372] Reviews of Friedberg's performances praise his "feeling for tonal beauty and for tonal colouring, within rather restricted limits," his "delicacy, clearness, and independence of articulation," and his "authenticity and rectitude of style, brilliance of technic [sic] and breadth and profundity of insight."[373]

While we have already heard Friedberg's solemnly measured performance of Schumann's *Romance in F sharp major* Op. 28 no. 2 (Sound Ex. 3.2), his 1953 recording of the second book of Robert Schumann's *Etudes Symphoniques* Op. 13 is equally remarkable. In the 'Thema' he only uses arpeggiation and dislocation where marked, where a wide stretch of the hand is required, or to delineate inner voices; and in the first variation marked *Poco più vivo,* he slightly lengthens the first note in sixteenth-note groups of four in response to accents. Otherwise, both readings are highly literal and temporally stable. In the lyrical second variation marked *Marcato il canto* however,

---

http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/1294599033?accountid=16376; and "Mr. Borwick's Recital: An English Pianist Coming Unheralded Makes a Success," *New York Times* (December 9, 1911): 13, accessed October 23, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/97122744?accountid=16376.

[372] "Brahms and Friedberg," *The New York Times* (May 29, 1932): X6, accessed October 23, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/100598792?accountid=16376.

[373] "Carl Friedberg's Recital: A New Pianist Appears in Carnegie Hall," *New York Times* (November 3, 1914): 11, accessed October 23, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/97603172?accountid=16376; and "Friedberg at His Best," *New York Times* (January 10, 1934): 25, accessed October 23, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/100916989?accountid=16376.

Friedberg uses less local rhythmic alterations, but noticeably more dislocation, arpeggiation and tempo flexibility, using the repeated inner chords to hasten or slow the temporal motion according to the shapes of phrases or in response to hairpin markings (Sound Ex. 3.6).

Though Friedberg's approach seems reminiscent of reports of Brahms's tendency to play quicker material fairly steadily and with a restrained approach to unnotated expressive devices, while favouring noticeably more arpeggiation, dislocation and tempo flexibility in slower more lyrical material, his live 1951 recording of Brahms's *Intermezzo in C major* Op. 119 no. 3 marked *Grazioso e giocoso* is quite another story. Here he tosses off some passages with little regard for accuracy, particularly the two improvisatory sixteenth note flourishes in m. 44 and 48; he makes rhetorical pauses before almost downbeats for emphasis; and he rushes toward the apexes of most phrases, particularly where *crescendi* are indicated, while slowing precipitously in other places. All that being said however, his approach contains many elements that are in keeping with the Clara ideal: his tempo modifications are always 'corrected' afterwards and one always has a sense of the underlying pulse; his playing is light and graceful; and he plays with subtle inflections of tone, time, dislocation and arpeggiation to expressively and structurally shape his performance. (Sound Ex. 3.7) Where elements of Friedberg's performance seem less compatible with the Clara ideal, the presence of a live audience might be a contributing factor.

The next three pupils are featured on a Pearl six-CD set entitled 'The Pupils of Clara Schumann.' The oldest of these, Fanny Davies (1861-1934), was popularly known as Clara Schumann's "most distinguished lady pupil," having "displayed her inheritance

of Clara Schumann's mind and art to the public when other traces of that vanished greatness had almost disappeared."[374] The language used to describe Davies's pianism indeed seems to posit her as a true disciple of Clara's method, from her 'beauty of tone and perfection in phrasing' and 'good taste...fluency and clearness,' to her 'pure, expressive...playing' that was 'free from any trace of affectation' and distinguished by 'textural beauty and mental poise.'[375] Fellow pupil Marie Fromm also recalls that Davies was "a very good example of [the] easy muscular movement and finely developed finger technique"[376] so characteristic of Clara's pupils.

Fanny Davies seems also to have inherited Clara's reverential and literal ideological approach to musical texts. After an 1887 performance of Bach's *Italian Concerto* she is praised for having "[made] no attempt to modernise Bach, as some pianists do, with the idea, no doubt, of exhibiting their cleverness," while it is elsewhere noted that in her performance of Bach's *Chromatic Fantasia*, "the original text was adhered to with praiseworthy devotion, considering that the work is now usually played in a modernised form."[377] While we know that pianists in the Schumann-Brahms circle tended to 'play what is there' in an approach that included expressive departures from

---

[374] "Miss Fanny Davies: A Biographical Sketch," *The Musical Times* (June 1, 1905): 366; and "Fanny Davies, 1861 - 1934," *The Musical Times* 75, no. 1100 (October 1934): 899, accessed April 9, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/918459.
[375] "Fanny Davies, 1861 - 1934," *The Musical Times* (October 1934): 899.
[376] "Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 31, no. 574 (December 1, 1890): 730, accessed July 18, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3362039; "Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 27, no. 516 (February 1, 1886): 82, accessed April 9, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3361776; "Miscellaneous Concerts, Intelligence, etc.," *TMTASCC* 32, no. 577 (March 1, 1891): 169, accessed April 10, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3362705; "Miss Fanny Davies's Recital," *TMTASCC* 27, no. 518 (April 1, 1886): 207, accessed April 10, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3361451; "Fanny Davies, 1861 - 1934," *The Musical Times* (October 1934): 899; and Fromm, "Some Reminiscences," 615.
[377] "Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 28, no. 530 (April 1, 1887): 216, accessed April 10, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3359798; and "Miss Fanny Davies: A Biographical Sketch," *The Musical Times* (June 1, 1905): 368.

scores, perhaps relative to what other pianists at the time were doing, neither the extremity nor frequency of Davies's use of unnotated expressive devices qualified as 'clever modernisations.'

On the issue of Fanny Davies's Brahmsian authority, in 1893 she premiered selections from Brahms's *Fantasien* and *Intermezzi* Op. 116 and 117, after which it was observed that though "the sketches are far from easy...Miss Fanny Davies had fully mastered them and her interpretation could not well be surpassed." In the same year, her performance of Brahms's *D Minor Piano Concerto* was deemed to have had "an authority to which only a handful of pianists...can lay claim."[378] Like Clara, Davies seems to have also played her part in the construction of burgeoning canonic identities, as evidenced by an account that echoes both Clara and Brahms's controlled tonal and temporal delineation of the features of scores:

> People seem unable to make up their minds whether [Brahms] will draw an audience...or keep them away. It depends...on how he is played...[and] Miss Fanny Davies is just the person to do it. She...gives him time to sound, and space to sound in. She spreads the chords instead of crashing them, and leads the melodies gently by the hand. The Gordian knots are not cut but 'smilingly unravelled'...[and] where the writing is crabbed - and of course it is now and then...more use is made of the damper pedal than is quite called for: but the case is urgent, and something must be done.[379]

---

[378] "Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 34, no. 601 (March 1, 1893): 151, accessed May 11, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3363023; and "Miss Fanny Davies: A Biographical Sketch," *The Musical Times* (June 1, 1905): 368.

[379] "Miss Fanny Davies," *The Observer* (May 8, 1927): 21, accessed April 10, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/481096191?accountid=16376. 'Gordian knots' are popularly used as a metaphor for impossible problems that are solved by either cheating or by thinking outside the box.

Davies's recordings could be behind much of the impetus to link Clara's performance style with Brahms's, reflective as they are of descriptions of Clara's emphasis on the mentally and physically reposeful communication of musical detail and structure. Davies's fastidious differentiation of textural complexities through subtly nuanced manipulations of tone, rhythm and attack on her 1930 recording of Robert Schumann's *Davidsbundlertänze* Op. 6 is captivating. In the fifth piece of the first book marked *Einfach*, Davies uses subtle dislocations and lilting local rhythmic alterations to emphasize the beginnings of phrases, while her tone and touch is evocative of descriptions of Clara and Brahms's 'hovering' and singing legato playing (Sound Ex. 3.8). In the fifth piece of the second book marked *Zart und singend*, Leech-Wilkinson discusses how she can be heard varying the length of time between bass notes and their dislocated (delayed) melodic notes according to their harmonic and structural function on both a small and large scale (Sound Ex. 3.9).[380] Perhaps these highly consistent and score-based textual departures are what Clara and Brahms meant by 'playing what is there,' while also providing further context for accounts of Davies's resistance to rendering works in a 'modernised form.'

Adelina de Lara (1872-1961) is also reported to have staunchly "maintained and professed the Clara Schumann method"[381] throughout her career. After an 1891 concert it is observed that she surmounted the difficulties of Schumann's *Etudes Symphoniques* "with an ease that fairly astonished while it delighted," and that she executed Beethoven's

[380] Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music*, chapter 6, paragraphs 13 - 16.
[381] "Madame Adelina de Lara," *The Guardian* (November 27, 1961): 2, accessed April 9, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/184768266?accountid=16376.

Thirty-Two Variations in C minor "with remarkable accuracy and finish."[382] Elsewhere her playing is described as "firm and crisp...delightfully elastic," and characterized by "plenty of intelligence."[383] De Lara seems also to have been noted for her emotionally restrained approach to performance - one explicitly allied here to themes of health:

> Mme. de Lara...heard, learned, and inherited from [Clara] the now almost lost, and perhaps irrecoverable, 'authentic' way of playing...The notes clinked together freely, instead of being, as in most modern performances, clogged together with the syrup of studied expression. For Mme de Lara all the tender sentiment is in the notes...It is a healthy, sturdy sentiment...second in importance to the musical meaning of the notes.[384]

Present day observers have also enthusiastically underlined the emotional and textual forthrightness of De Lara's recordings, and thus her representativeness of a unified Schumann-Brahms school of pianism as well. As Jerrold Northrop Moore writes in his notes for the Pearl CD set, her 1951 recordings of Brahms's *Intermezzo in E Flat major* Op. 117 no. 1 (Sound Ex. 3.10) and *Rhapsody in G minor* Op. 79 no. 2 (Sound Ex. 3.11) evidence "a wise and dedicated pupil of Clara Schumann, for whom those lessons were the greatest experience of her life, playing...with heart and soul at the service of the music rather than the player's ego."[385] Michael Musgrave too praises De Lara's attention to

---

[382] "Music in Birmingham," *TMTASCC* 32, no. 5 (June 1, 1891): 347, accessed April 5, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3363098.
[383] "University Intelligence: Gentlemen's Concerts," *The Manchester Guardian* (April 24, 1895): 8, accessed April 9, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/483220969?accountid=16376; and "Sir Charles Hallé's Concerts," *TMTASCC* 33, no. 589 (March 1, 1892): 148, accessed April 5, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3361350.
[384] "Two Schumann Recitals," *The Manchester Guardian* (September 17, 1952): 5, accessed April 9, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/479352085?accountid=16376.
[385] Tim Page, "Clara Schumann and Her Pupils," *The New York Times* (April 26, 1987): H32, accessed April 9, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/110781133?accountid=16376.

Brahms's verbal tempo markings and dynamic indications, her careful tonal delineation of phrases and inner voices, and her restraint in matters of tempo modification. Where she does hold back material in more lyrical sections or second subjects, Musgrave notes that it is in response to hairpin markings or to create contrast between sections.[386]

Interestingly Musgrave also asserts that, "in [Op.117] De Lara's playing may have been close to Clara's," while her performance of Op. 79 no. 2 "seems to capture what Brahms wanted, with its freedom in response to his markings and slow tempo for emphasis."[387] Though implying a split here between Brahms and Clara's pianistic approaches, according to Musgrave De Lara's textual departures are only Brahms-like in that their use is instigated by the presence of notation, and because they elucidate detail and structure through a slowing for emphasis. No mention is made however of De Lara's tendency to rush on both a small- and large-scale: a practice that in Schumann's *Romance* Op. 28 and Brahms's *Intermezzo* Op. 117 no. 1 lend her performances a feeling of underlying restlessness; and in the case of Op. 79 no. 2 has ramifications for both quality of tone and accuracy of technique. Indeed, De Lara's performances of both of these works by Brahms will be discussed at length in the following chapters.

While Neal Peres Da Costa does discuss De Lara's use of local rhythmic alterations, arpeggiation and dislocation in order to create agogic emphasis, to propel harmonic and melodic motion forward and to bring about changes in mood, he too refrains from discussing her tendency to rush over larger stretches of music.[388] As with Brahms, the trope of ageing seems to be particularly pertinent here, perhaps given the palatability of De Lara's style in general. While Musgrave invokes themes of the body

[386] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 315.
[387] Ibid., 317.
[388] Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 186 - 87.

and mind when he asserts that her recordings have a degree of historical authority "despite her obvious limitations of technique [body] and occasionally memory of reading [mind]," Tim Page less generously suggests that what he hears on her recordings are "sketchy...run-throughs played by the remains of a good pianist."[389] Regardless however, like Fanny Davies, De Lara's Brahmsian historical authority seems unblemished by her recorded legacy.

The sketchy run-throughs of Ilona Eibenschütz (1872-1967) however, turn this discussion towards those members of the Schumann-Brahms circle deemed to have less historical authority in the performance of Brahms's piano music. Having studied with Clara between 1885 and 1890, at first glance Ilona's outlier status seems rather strange. In the years immediately proceeding her time in Clara's charge, Ilona was praised for demonstrating "much intelligence and the excellent results of Madame Schumann's teaching," and for her "gracefulness...combined with energy, lucidity of exposition, melodious phrasing and true intensity of feeling." In another review she is even called "one of the most brilliant and sympathetic pianists of the Madame Schumann School."[390]

Ilona was also the first to hear and publicly perform Brahms's Op. 118 and Op. 119 piano pieces: selections of which she went on to later record. As Ilona recalls, Brahms appeared at her house one day manuscript in hand, and "began to play...all the Clavierstücke, Op. 118 and 119!...His playing was altogether grand and noble, like his

---

[389] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 314 - 15, brackets are mine; Page, "Clara Schumann and Her Pupils," H32.

[390] "Pianoforte Recitals," *TMTASCC* 32, no. 580 (June 1, 1891): 341 - 42, accessed May 11, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3363081; "Music in Belfast," *TMTASCC* 42, no. 697 (March 1, 1901): 189, accessed May 11, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3368115; and "Our London Correspondence," *The Manchester Guardian* (March 30, 1904): 4, accessed May 11, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/474339971?accountid=16376.

compositions."[391] Later Ilona overheard him mentioning, "She is the pianist I best like to hear playing my works."[392] In a review of her 1894 performance of these pieces, one observer calls Ilona's rendering "artistic and energetic," while another suggests that, "it is hardly possible to imagine better performances of these beautiful works." Ilona's Brahmsian authority seems further confirmed by a review proclaiming that her performance of Brahms's *G Minor Quartet* "was truly memorable for its life and light...she [is] the best interpreter of Brahms before the public. No one could label that composer as a Dryasdust when *she* [is] at the piano, whatever may have been said or thought when one of the more timidly and wrongly reverential school was there."[393]

For other observers however, Ilona's performances seem to have been less compatible with expectations of how a pianist blessed with both Clara's teaching and Brahms's enthusiasm 'should' sound. In 1891 it is reported that her playing "was exceedingly nervous...[and] this nervousness spoiled both tone and technique." Two years later it is noted that her playing "lacks distinctiveness,"[394] while in 1904 it is said that her performance of Brahms's *G minor Quartet* suffered from "a certain excess of

---

[391] Mrs. Carl Derenburg (Ilona Eibenschütz), "My Recollections of Brahms," 599.
[392] Allan Evans, liner notes for *Behind the Notes: Brahms Performed by Colleagues and Pupils 1903 - 1952,* Arbiter 160 (CD), 2012, 26.
[393] "Miscellaneous Concerts, Intelligence," *TMTASCC* 35, no. 614 (April 1, 1894): 263 - 65, accessed May 11, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3361872; "Mdlle. Ilona Eibenschütz," *The Observer* (March 11, 1894): 6, accessed May 11, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/473805826?accountid=16376; and "The Magazines," *Academy and Literature* 84, no. 2128 (February 15, 1913): 211, accessed May 11, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/1298679246?accountid=16376. Emphasis from original.
[394] "Mdlle. Ilona Eibenschütz," *The Academy* 39, no. 977 (January 17, 1891): 72, accessed May 11, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/1298628997?accountid=16376; and Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 34, no. 601 (March 1, 1893): 151, accessed May 11, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3363023.

elegance" and "lacked a little dignity."[395] Accusations of nervousness, excess and a lack of distinctiveness and dignity seem terribly dire for a representative of a school of pianism constructed in conscious opposition to these very qualities.

Ilona had in fact been 'sent' to study with Clara, in the hopes that some of the habits she had accrued earlier while touring as a child prodigy might be cured. At her audition for Clara, Ilona (whom Joachim called 'the note-eater') reportedly implored, "I know that I make many mistakes in my playing, and have slipped into bad ways, but...I promise that I will do exactly as you tell me."[396] Clara too seems to have had serious reservations about Ilona's playing, and while Ilona was away premiering the Op. 118 and 119 pieces Clara wrote anxiously to Brahms, "Between ourselves, I do not think Ilona understands the pieces as they need to be understood. She goes too quickly over everything."[397] Though she could certainly be a demanding teacher, Clara seems to have quite hard on Ilona. In an 1890 letter, Clara writes:

> I was really rather disappointed yesterday, to note that none of the pieces which you played were perfect, and I think you should therefore, have another fortnight's quiet study here in Frankfurt, to prepare for Cologne and Berlin. I have told you so often of my fear that because of the ease with which you learn you are tempted not to practice CONSCIENTIOUSLY ENOUGH. I COULD PROVE THIS TO YOU IN EVERY PIECE WHICH YOU PLAYED YESTERDAY and would like to go through them all once more with you. I wish I could spare you the experiences which are inescapable if you do not learn to be STRICTER WITH YOURSELF. You will surely see in my candour only motherly concern and forethought.

---

[395] "Our London Correspondence," *The Manchester Guardian* (March 30, 1904): 4, accessed May 11, 2013, http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/474339971?accountid=16376.
[396] Ducat, "Conversations with Ilona Derenburg," in Rountree, "Ilona Eibenschütz," 14.
[397] *Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe,* II: 540 - 42, in Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 316.

Following Ilona's January 1891 debut in London, Clara again writes:

> You must heed this very carefully: BE PRECISE AND METICULOUS with everything even to the smallest detail. The public expects this of you and must never disappoint...It must be studied and WORKED OUT very CONSCIENTIOUSLY ...especially in the PHRASING...Do not take it lightly because it does not present technical difficulties for you![398]

Though it seems reasonable to assume that Clara was as concerned for Ilona's reputation as she was for her own and Brahms's, some of her letters to Ilona are decidedly backhanded. In July 1891 Clara writes, "It gives me great pleasure that B. is so kind to you. He very much likes to have fun with pretty and interesting young girls. I wish however, for your sake, that he would talk about music seriously with you. Did you play to him at all?"[399] While this is perhaps evidence of Clara's tendency to "rather enjoy getting her knife in to musical contemporaries, especially if they happened to be pianists,"[400] here was a pianist famous in her own right and not on account of Clara's teaching nor Brahms's support: one whose performance style seems not to have been defined by control, yet one who would undoubtedly be seen as a representative of a Schumann-Brahms school of pianism.

There is nothing to suggest that Brahms ever heeded Clara's warnings about 'the little Eibenschütz,'[401] but modern ears certainly have. Michael Musgrave finds Ilona's

---

[398] Evans, *Behind the Notes*, 25. The author was reportedly handed these letters by a cellist in London. Capitalization from original.
[399] Ibid., 25.
[400] "Greatness and Littleness of Clara Schumann," *Academy and Literature* (May 10, 1913): 586.
[401] *Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe,* in Avins, *BLL,* 705.

1903 recording of the *Ballade in G Minor* Op. 118 no.3 (Sound Ex. 3.12) to be perfunctory, lacking in distinctive opening rhythms in response to Brahms's articulation markings, and lacking in contrasts of tone and touch within and between sections. He asserts that Ilona's inattention to notated detail and structure, and her inability to adopt Brahms's practice of 'holding for emphasis,' is a direct result of her brisk tempo and its tendency to accumulate. In sum, he "finds Eibenschütz to be skimming over the surface of the music," and that, "this rendering is not of the 'grand and noble' character that must surely have been present in his playing of this particular piece when she heard it."[402]

Musgrave's critique of Ilona's 1952 recording of the *Intermezzo in E Minor* Op. 119 no. 2 (Sound Ex. 3.13) runs along similar lines, though here he takes particular issue with her tendency to rush through structural boundaries marked for emphasis through a holding back, or to slow where not marked or structurally warranted. Ilona's blurring and exaggeration of structure here leads Musgrave to assert that, "the impression arises in Op. 119 no. 2 that the sense of a 'structurally shaped' performance has become caricatured," though he suggests that, "such is the extent of the distortion here that one senses that it must have been influenced largely by what she heard from Brahms; that is, that he too rendered the piece freely and shaped it 'structurally' to excess."[403] Not only did Ilona imitate the exaggerations and sketchiness of Brahms's deteriorated later practice therefore, to make matters worse her recordings are deemed to be "from her late years and the characteristics of her playing would seem to have become exaggerated."[404] Ilona's performances are thus exaggerations of exaggerations.

---

[402] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 309 - 11.
[403] Ibid., 324.
[404] Ibid., 311.

Additional context for Ilona's tempo modifications comes from George S. Bozarth, who again looks to Fanny Davies's annotated metronome markings from Brahms's performance of his *Trio in C Minor* Op. 101. According to Davies's annotations, in the opening statement of the second movement Brahms seems to have made “a brief but clear crescendo to its highest note, followed by a diminuendo that parallels the descending contour, indicating gradations not only in tone but also in rhythm, as Brahms lingered a little on the crest of the melody, lengthening the phrase a bit rather than keeping to a strict metronomic pace."[405] In Eibenschütz's 1952 performance of the opening thirty bars of the same work however, Bozarth observes that she differentiates both small- and large-scale structure in an approach that involved both a holding back *and* rushing: by playing more slowly while "allowing the tempo to fluctuate with the shape of the melodic line, pushing towards each peak, then relaxing" in lyrical second themes, and by playing at a much brisker though more stable pace in in first themes.[406] (Sound Ex. 3.14)

While this seems to match Brahms's bifurcated approach to tonal and temporal manipulation in quicker versus slower musical material, and though it is possible that Davies neglected to note that Brahms's 'brief but clear crescendo to the highest note' of phrases was accompanied by a slight hastening of tempo, in his final analysis Bozarth warns that while "such elasticity of tempo was acknowledged by Brahms to George Henschel in 1880...he cautioned that it should be employed ‘con discrezione.’” Musgrave too asserts that, "there must have been a limit to the freedom Brahms would have wanted: 'keine Passagen' would surely have appealed to him too in such carefully constructed

[405] Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 182 - 84, in Bozarth, *Performing Brahms*, 179.
[406] Bozarth, *Performing Brahms*, 194 (note 21).

music as Eibenschütz plays."[407] Indeed, if Fanny Davies is right in that the correct tempo is one that reveals rather than obscures the topography of musical compositions, then Ilona's tendency to blur detail and structure through prohibitively quick tempi, precipitous rushing and unwarranted slowing must surely be *wrong*.

Though both Musgrave and Da Costa notice that Ilona tends to spread chords to create contrast rather than following Brahms's articulation and dynamic markings, Da Costa adds that she also uses the device to underline poignant harmonies, like her spreading of the diminished seventh harmonies that prepare the B section of Op. 118 no. 3.[408] What Da Costa doesn't mention however is that Ilona's spreading of chords in Op. 118 no. 3 often accompanies her blurring of structural boundaries; and while only the tonic chords on either side of the diminished seventh harmonies that prepare the B section are accented, Ilona's spreading of the latter effectively undercuts the indicated emphasis of the former: issues to which we will return in the following chapters. In any case, while all of this might serve as proof that Ilona was indeed 'playing' detail and structure, just in unexpected ways, the impression left by her performances is not one of control. Ilona's textual departures may *sometimes* elucidate the features of those scores, but in general they are merely means to an end that is quite irreconcilable with current notions of how Brahms's music should sound and mean.

While the tenets of Clara's method do seem to unify the performance approaches of most pianists in her circle, what divides them is the sounding and signifying effect of those pianists' textual departures, and whether they ultimately serve to blur or emphasize a score's detail and structure. Clara, Fanny Davies and Adelina de Lara seemed to have

---

[407] George Henschel, *Personal Recollections of Johannes Brahms* (Boston, 1907): 78 - 79, in Ibid., 184; and Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 317.
[408] Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 186.

espoused a literal and reverential approach to performance, using subtle and highly controlled manipulations of tone and time that revealed both the complexity and simplicity of Brahms's textural, melodic, rhythmic, harmonic and structural designs. Ilona's performances of Brahms's music on the other hand have a "high-strung intensity that pushes relentlessly...[and] a jazz-like nonchalance"[409]: one that compels listeners to encounter her mind and body, and perhaps Brahms's as well. To my ears, her arpeggiations, dislocations and local rhythmic alterations suggest a limp rather than a gallant stride; her tendency to rush and slow unexpectedly, thus blurring the detail and contours of Brahms's sound and wholesome designs, suggests an agitated mind and a vulnerable body; while her harshness of tone, wrong notes and truncations only serve to further dismember Brahms's hale and hearty scores.

Despite the nearly fifty year interval between recording dates, there is a similarity of spirit captured on Ilona's recordings of Op. 118 no. 3 and Op. 119 no. 2 that perhaps warrants a re-examination of both Brahms's enthusiasm for her playing as well as those elements of his described performance style that are less compatible with the Clara ideal: elements typically passed over in distillations of the essentials of his style. What if Ilona's performance style was indeed 'imitative and rebellious' in that by emulating some quality she heard in Brahms's own performances on one hand, she was effectively defying the precepts of Clara's strict teaching on the other?

[409] Evans, *Behind the Notes*, 26.

3.5) Brahms's Performance Style Reappraised

There is ample evidence that Brahms's pianism had *always* differed from Clara's. As Florence May observes, "Brahms's conception of many works of the great masters, together with his whole style of playing, differed *in toto* from Frau Schumann's."[410] Indeed, there are elements in descriptions of Brahms's performances that simply have no parallel in those of Clara's: elements that are rarely included in modern distillations of the essentials of his style, probably because they are incompatible with the ideology of mind-body control to such an extent as to render their replication *un*Brahmsian. By dismissing these elements as deficiencies or exaggerations however, the literal and reverential performances of Clara's most devoted pupils and the precepts of her playing and teaching have remained linked to Brahms. I suspect that it is precisely this other quality of Brahms's performance style that lies in the gaps between the hale and hearty Brahms of our imagination and Brahms as he was recorded, as well as between his enthusiasm for Ilona's playing and attempts to devalue her historical authority.

While the wrong notes, harshness and exaggerations of Brahms's 'spirited sketches' have traditionally been explained by his deteriorated later pianism, positive and negative reports of his technique appear throughout his lifetime. In the 1850s Walter Hübbe reports that, "[Brahms] does not play like a consummately trained, highly intelligent musician," while Bülow and Dietrich report in the 1880s and 90s that Brahms

[410] May, *Johannes Brahms*, II: 211 - 12, in Philip, *Performing Brahms*, 368.

played with 'matchless beauty and clarity' and 'wonderful power and mastery.'[411] Furthermore, many of Clara's pupils seem to have assumed that he had once been a virtuoso, like Fanny Davies's assertion that, "Brahms in his earlier years *must have* been a pianist of remarkable technique [as] clearly shown by the well-known story of his transposing the Kreutzer sonata at a public concert on the spur of the moment."[412] Inculcated as she was in the Clara ideal, the narrative of Brahms's deteriorating technique might have seemed like the only logical explanation for what she heard in his later performances.

While Clara's method seems to have been defined by a hyperawareness of the link between how pianists play and understandings of composer's identities, Brahms on the other hand seems to have performed with the "radiant serenity of a mind happy in the exercise of his art."[413] Marie Fromm recalls the levity that accompanied his visits to the household of her teacher, where he and Clara would play duets for the gathered students. Recalling the strange juxtaposition of Brahms's "shockingly bad" pianism as he "[took] the bass, pounding away somewhere near the right notes, while [Clara], of course, was perfect," Fromm remembers that, "he was simple as a child, and played games with us...these were times of pure delight."[414] Fromm's account not only recalls Brahms's childlike love of games, but it also implies that his booming bass lines may have simply been a function of his unbridled abandon in performance, rather than a calculated

---

[411] Walter Hübbe, *Brahms in Hamburg* (Hamburg, 1902), II; letter from Hans von Bülow to Hermann Wolff dated October 20, 1881, in Von Bülow, *Briefe,* 6, 98; and Dietrich, *Erinnerungen,* 2 - 3; in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 122, 125.
[412] Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 182 - 84, in Bozarth, *Performing Brahms*, 173. Emphasis mine.
[413] J. V. Widmann, *Johannes Brahms in Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1898): 17 - 18, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 123.
[414] Fromm, "Some Reminiscences," 615.

architectural foundation for his delineation of textural complexities. Carl Friedberg too remembers how Brahms played "half-drunk...never were the two hands together, always apart," and with "gusto and freedom."[415]

Contrary to Clara's insistence on the cultivation of inner and outer repose by avoiding physical tension, 'rush and hurry' and eccentric displays of personality, Brahms seems to have had a complete disregard for the way he was perceived at the piano. As Ilona Eibenschütz recalls, "he played as if he were just improvising, with heart and soul, sometimes humming to himself, forgetting everything around him," while Albert Dietrich remembers how, "bending his head down over the keys...humming the melody aloud as he played," Brahms could be seen "trembling with inner excitement." Ethel Smyth also describes how Brahms would "accompanying himself with a sort of muffled roar, as of Titans stirred to sympathy in the bowels of the earth": a sound Ferdinand Schumann describes as a "gasping, grumble or snoring."[416]

On Brahms's physical presence at the keyboard, Stanford remembers how he would play, "head thrown back and slightly tilted as if listening to the band rather than to himself, the shoulders hunched up and the arms almost as straight as the legs and well above the keyboard."[417] It is hard to imagine a pianist playing with a 'covered' technique whilst sitting at the keyboard in this way, suggesting that there may have been occasions in which Brahms indeed attacked the keys from above; that he may not have shared Clara's emphasis on 'easy muscular movements' in order to communicate inner and outer

---

[415] DiClemente, "Brahms Performance Practice," 57, from Transcript, 181 - 83; and 58, from Transcript 210 - 11.
[416] Derenburg, "My Recollections of Brahms," 599; Dietrich, *Erinnerungen*, 3; Ethel Smyth, *Impressions*, I: 266; and Ferdinand Schumann, "Brahms and Clara Schumann," trans. J. Mayer, *The Musical Quarterly* 2 (1916): 508; in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 124.
[417] Stanford, *Pages*, 200, in ibid., 125.

repose; and that he may not have been concerned about subordinating his body and instrument to the communication of musical works in performance. As Eugenie Schumann remembers, "I never gained the impression that Brahms looked upon the piano as a beloved friend, as did my mother. He seemed to be in battle with it...when he played passionate parts, it was as though a tempest were tossing clouds...He made one feel the limitations that the instrument placed upon him."[418]

Brahms also seems to have been significantly less concerned than Clara about distinguishing his pianism from that of his Romanticist contemporaries, and many descriptions use evocatively poetic language to capture the impression left by his performances. Robert Schumann observes that in Brahms's playing, one was "drawn into ever more enchanting spheres... some of them demoniac in spirit while graceful in form...[a]nd then, like a rushing torrent, they were all united by him into a single waterfall, the cascades of which were overarched by a peaceful rainbow, while butterflies played about its borders accompanied by the voices of nightingales." Gustav Ophüls too seems to describe a lovesick *Joh. Kreisler jun*., in his recollection of how Brahms's pianism was "full of deep feeling and poetic dreaminess," while Max Graf similarly observes that, "in the great climaxes...ran the undertone of subterranean rumbling like the echo of a remote earthquake...remind[ing] listeners that beneath the heavy boulders of classic form the romanticism of Brahms's youth was buried."[419]

Brahms and Clara may also have differed in their approach to performing the music of past composers. Take for example Florence May's account that Brahms's

---

[418] E. Schumann, *Erinnerungen*, 269 - 70, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 127.
[419] R. Schumann, "Neue Bahnen," *NZfM* 39, no. 18 (October 28, 1853): 185 - 86; Gustav Ophüls, *Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms* (Berlin, 1921): 19 (123); and Graf, *Legend of a Musical City*, 105; in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 121, 123, 134.

interpretation of Bach was 'unconventional' and contrary to the many 'distinguished adherents' who favoured 'a simply flowing style'; or the review proclaiming Ilona to be the best interpreter of Brahms before the public regardless of what someone of the 'more timidly and wrongly reverential school' might say. Though both Brahms and Clara used unnotated tonal and temporal manipulations to 'play what is there,' it is possible that they represented opposite poles within a range of the frequency, extremity and intended effect of those textual departures. It is intriguing to ponder whether Clara may have been one of the distinguished adherents of just such a timidly reverential school of pianism. May certainly seemed startled by the depth and range of expression Brahms asked of her.

Interestingly, while Clara's most devoted pupils were praised for their emotional and physical restraint, this poise was often framed as a lack of depth and power - particularly in weightier repertoires. As one reviewer remarks, "Miss Davies['s] rendering...lacked distinctiveness and character. Beethoven's later works need power *as well as* refinement for their proper interpretation."[420] Adelina De Lara is described as having been "physically overweighted" in performance, while her interpretations of Beethoven and Brahms are respectively deemed to be "neat and unpretentious, but unquestionably weak," and "creditable rather than impressive."[421] Because descriptions of some of Clara's other pupils seem to echo the less celebrated aspects of Brahms's approach to the piano however, their playing styles may give us more clues to how Brahms played than Davies's or De Lara's.

---

[420] "Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 28, no. 528 (February 1, 1887): 85, accessed April 10, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3360861.

[421] "Mr. Popper's Concert," *TMTASCC* 33, no. 587 (January 1, 1892): 23, accessed April 5, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3365264; and "Pianoforte Recitals," *TMTASCC* 33, no. 591 (May 1, 1892): 278, accessed May 5, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3362520; and "Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 34, no. 599 (January 1, 1893): 23, accessed April 5, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3362745.

One such pupil is Leonard Borwick, who is described as having "a mercurial style that had not come to him by [Clara's] teaching." Though Borwick's playing could at times be austere, Brahms famously stated in 1891 that Borwick's performance of his *Second Piano Concerto* "contained all the fire and passion and technical ability [he] had hoped for in his most sanguine moments."[422] This might suggest that, like most pianists today, Borwick was able to vary his approach according to a given repertoire or occasion. It is also noted that Borwick played as if "music poured from the instrument in floods of beauty like waterfalls flashing in the sunshine...[and] like champagne sparkling in the light of electric bulbs": a description that invites comparisons with Robert Schumann's poetic account of Brahms's style. Elsewhere it is reported that Borwick played as though "unconscious of the audience...[and] in that reverie at the piano he communed with beauty and saw visions; and when he asked us in, it was to see those visions...not to hear him play"; while another observer notes that his playing "had a certain intensity, verging sometimes on impatience."[423]

Descriptions of Borwick's impatient 'visions' are certainly reminiscent of the restlessness of Brahms and Ilona's spirited sketches. Rather than seeking to carefully outline the detail and frame of musical works like De Lara and Davies might do, these pianists' described and recorded performances seem to communicate an impression of spirit of the work in question. Indeed, 'sketchiness' can certainly imply a kind of restlessness, while a 'sketch' can refer to the fleeting impression of a thing, atmosphere or

---

[422] "Fanny Davies, 1861-1934," *The Musical Times* (October 1934): 899; and Greene, "Leonard Borwick," 22.

[423] William Saunders, "Leonard Borwick: A Memory and Appreciation," *The Musical Times* 67, no. 1003 (Sept. 1, 1926): 798, accessed July 18, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/912664; Greene, "Leonard Borwick," 17, 23; and "Leonard Borwick," *The Musical Times* 66, no. 992 (October 1, 1925): 942 - 43, accessed July 18, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/913463.

mood. Indeed, Fanny Davies recalls that in Brahms's playing there was a sense of "aspiration, wild fantastic flights, majestic calm, deep tenderness without sentimentality, delicate, wayward humour, sincerity [and] noble passion"; and in her account of Brahms's performance of the *Trio in C Minor* Op. 101 she describes a 'shadowy and mysterious flitting' and an 'undercurrent of breathless agitation.'[424]

As we have already seen, this restless agitation is certainly evident in Carl Friedberg's live 1951 recording of the *Intermezzo in C major* Op. 119 no. 3. Audience aside, and given the many hours he spent hearing Brahms play his own piano works, it is difficult to imagine his spirited rendition as having been shaped by Clara's precepts alone. Similarly, right after having posited Nathalie Janotha's 'beautiful, suggestive, poetic, sustained and noble playing' as being most reminiscent of Clara's, George Bernard Shaw notes the pupil's tendency to "occasionally brea[k] out in waywardness and displays of strength, suggestive of possession by a fitful musical demon."[425] Recalling Janotha's hair-raising performance of Mendelssohn's 'Spinning Song,' Friedberg and Janotha are two further examples of pupils whose described and recorded performance styles align more closely with Brahms's as opposed to Clara's. Another example is that paragon of Brahmsian control, Artur Schnabel. Though Schnabel studied piano with Theodor Leschetizky, after being introduced to Brahms by his composition teacher Eusebius Mandyczewski, Schnabel frequently had the opportunity to hear the composer perform. As noted in 1935:

---

[424] Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 182 - 84, in Bozarth, *Performing Brahms*, 172, 174.
[425] Shaw, I: 639, in Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music,* chapter 6, paragraph 11.

> Once or twice - in [Schumann's] G minor Sonata and 'Carnaval' - Schnabel played as if he were impatient and dissatisfied with the music...[with] a tendency to hurry in semiquaver passages...a habit which one might describe as Beethovenian of reducing figures and decorations to their barest essentials, often quite apart from any difficulty in playing them clearly; and his tone, above *mezzo forte*, is frequently harsh because he produces it to too great an extent with violent movements.[426]

Harris Goldsmith observes that in Schnabel's recording of the *Allegro vivace* final movement of Beethoven's *Sonata in E flat Major* Op. 27 no. 1, there are "moments of crazy impulsiveness, a roguish brio, an abandon, [and] a willingness to take high risks."[427] (Sound Ex. 3.15) Schnabel can indeed be heard rushing through most sixteenth-note passages in this recording, often hastily reducing the ends of these flourishes before diving into the next one. This is a highly risky practice considering the quickness of his chosen tempo, and there are a few moments where his technical grip falters as a result. His tone in this recording is also frequently harsh, particularly in the punchy staccato right hand eighth note octaves that make up the movement's second subject, and it is easy to imagine him here striking the keys from above with rigid fingers and arms.

Compared to descriptions of Clara's performance ideology and the recordings of her most dedicated pupils, the described and recorded performance styles of Johannes Brahms and Ilona Eibenschütz seem to distinguish them as furthest from the controlled Clara ideal that is currently understood to generally characterize the approaches of the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists. While it is impossible to know whether Brahms and Eibenschütz played in exactly the same ways, each pianist's approach seems to have

---

[426] "London Concerts: Pianists of the Month: Schnabel and the Schubert Sonatas," *The Musical Times* 76, no. 1103 (January 1935): 68, accessed July 22, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/949150.

[427] Harris Goldsmith, "Schnabel the Pianist," *The Musical Times* 130, no. 1756 (June 1989): 336, accessed November 3, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/966029.

included truncation, wrong notes, rushing, agitation, a certain negligence of notation, and a more percussively vertical attack resulting in harshness of tone in quicker material; and more attention to detail through arpeggiation and dislocation, the shaping of phrases through both rushing and slowing, and a closer tone and attack in slower material. This bifurcated approach might explain contradictory verbal accounts of Brahms's style, like Stanford's observation that, 'The skips...were accomplished regardless of accuracy...there were handfuls of wrong notes...the touch was somewhat hard and lacking in force-control; [but] it was at its best in the slow movement, where [Brahms] produced the true velvety quality, probably because he was not so hampered by his own difficulties.' Like Schnabel, whose playing also featured these elements 'quite apart from any difficulty,' perhaps it is time to accept that they were a conscious part of Brahms and Eibenschütz's approaches, rather than evidence of minds and bodies deteriorated by age.

More importantly however, the presence of these elements tells us something about what those pianists furthest from the Clara 'ideal' considered to be essential and disposable in the performance of Brahms's piano works. Far from simply communicating mental and physical poise through the careful elucidation of detail and structure, Brahms, Eibenschütz and a number of other pianists associated with the Schumann-Brahms circle seem to have been driven by a desire to communicate the *spirit* of their 'spirited sketches'; viewing their minds, bodies and instruments as more than disappearing agents in the transmission of composers' works and identities. This style of performance may have had much more in common with Liszt's 'spirit over the letter' than Brahms's more politically-minded supporters may have liked: supporters like Clara, who actively discouraged *both* Brahms and Eibenschütz from performing his works publicly. Indeed, perhaps Brahms

admired the 'little note-eater's' playing because it reminded him of that 'undertone of subterranean rumbling' of his own Romanticism: one buried under the boulders of his hale and hearty identity in the imagination of his most ardent supporters.

I propose that it is this dimension that links Brahms and Eibenschütz's spirited performances on one hand, while distancing them from the more lettered performances of Clara Schumann, Amina Goodwin, Fanny Davies and Adelina de Lara on the other. Other pianists in the Brahms-Schumann circle like Nathalie Janotha, Leonard Borwick and Carl Friedberg may have espoused an approach to performance that fell somewhere in the middle of this continuum. This is not to suggest that Clara and her most devoted pupils did not play expressively or brilliantly. Furthermore, and as we will see in the following chapters, Adelina De Lara's performance style is oceans away from what modern pianists of all ethical stripes would call controlled. What I am suggesting is that by ignoring those elements of Brahms and Eibenschütz's performance styles that do not communicate mental and physical control, we have effectively eliminated most of what distinguished their performances from Clara's, and from ours as well.

While all of the above-mentioned pianists use unnotated expressive devices, it is the extremity and frequency of their textual departures that ultimately either elucidate or blur detail and structure, and thus either communicate or subvert current notions of 'characteristic' Brahmsian mental and physical control: notions that have been built around descriptions of Clara's performances and teaching. As their textual departures tend to blur rather than clarify the detail and structure of Brahms's scores, thus representing an approach to performance furthest from the Clara ideal, I propose that

Eibenschütz and Brahms are the most *un*Brahmsian pianists of the Schumann-Brahms circle: a distinction that should give modern performer-scholars serious pause.

3.6) Coda

Discourse surrounding RIP Brahms style still tends to be dominated by the cautionary trope of 'how free is free, how strict is strict, and in what kinds of pieces,' with elements of early-recorded Brahms style being applied in a highly regimented and pointillistic manner: in response to notation and in order to elucidate detail and structure, thereby ultimately reinforcing ideas related to Brahms's hale and hearty canonic identity. While there are remarkably few pianists who primarily use early recordings as evidence of late-Romantic style, Neal Peres Da Costa's RIP Brahms performances, beautiful though they are, are perhaps an unwitting elucidation of the extent to which the aesthetic ideology of control continues to mediate such ventures.

In his performance of the first movement of Brahms's *Cello Sonata in E minor* Op. 38 for example (Sound Ex. 3.16), he uses arpeggiation, dislocation and local rhythmic alterations throughout and he plays noticeably slower in sections marked *dolce* for contrast; but his instances of rushing happen within very restricted ranges (both in amplitude and material covered), they are always in response to notated indications such as crescendi and hairpins, and he always slows to re-establish tempo afterward, as well as to resolve cadences and prepare structural boundaries. In reference to his similar approach in Brahms's *Violin Sonata in G Major* Op. 78, Da Costa asserts that these "changes of tempo…helped us to clarify structural elements and to make our expressive intention bold and clear."[428] While Da Costa's temporal modifications are reminiscent of Fanny Davies's recordings, his approach is quite far removed from Adelina De Lara's and

[428] Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 307 - 8.

even further from Ilona Eibenschütz's, who tends to rush over *all* phrases, and through indications to slow, cadences, and other structural boundaries. In other words, Da Costa uses tempo to 'play' detail and structure in ways only evidenced by those members of the Schumann-Brahms circle closest to the Clara 'ideal.'

What might happen then if one simply imitated the recordings of the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists in a process that *includes* the most extreme elements of their performance approaches, allowing them to unravel Brahmsian sound, score and meaning to unknown ends? Expanding upon William Brooks's discussion of Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's theory of experimental systems and his distinction between 'technical objects' and 'epistemic things,' when an object (an element of period Brahms style, for example) is used in a predetermined (controlled) way whereby the outcome (control) is already known, it is thus a technical object, as it only engenders further technical objects (more controlled Brahms performances). Conversely, when that same evidence is used as an open-ended 'epistemic thing,' such processes create "not new artefacts but new questions, not new histories but new communities ...adopt[ing] a mode of inquiry precisely to assert that the job is *not* done...[and] that the questions they ask outlast the answers they seem to supply."[429] Such processes *are* experimental, as they problematize the very forces that would have them remain fixed and closed: forces like the Brahmsian aesthetic ideology of control. Before early-recorded Brahms style can be used as an epistemic thing however, the recordings of the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists stand ready for a fundamental re-evaluation: not in order to reaffirm current notions of Brahmsian identity, but rather to problematize them from the inside-out.

---

[429] Brooks, "Historical Precedents," adapted from Michael Schwab ed., *Experimental Systems: Future Knowledge in Artistic Research* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013), in *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology*, 195.

4) Analyses of the Schumann - Brahms Pupil Recordings

4.1) Introduction

Having focused primarily on historical documentary traces thus far, it is time to turn to a single-minded examination of sound. Though they are generally regarded as invaluable evidence of late-Romantic performance practices, early twentieth century recordings still tend to be treated as mere addendums to more tangible yet malleable traces such as biographies, eyewitness accounts and scores. Perhaps it is in our nature as visual and tactile creatures to trust what we can see and touch, while the audible past is viewed as ephemeral and potentially evidentiary of an unreliable performer, on a bad day, and by way of less than ideal recording conditions and technologies. Even HIP players who still handle historical utterances and scores with reverent meticulousness are scandalized at the thought of anyone approaching historical sounds in a similar fashion.

While modern pianists have somewhat warmed to Chopin as heard on Theodor Leschetizky's 1906 Welte-Mignon piano rolls and Raoul Pugno's 1903 Gramophone & Typewriter Co. recordings, hearing Debussy perform his piano works like a bawdy nineteenth-century beer hall entertainer is quite another story. Perhaps this is because Leschetizky and Pugno communicate a version of Chopin that is consistent with his bardic Romantic identity: a narrative buttressed by performance norms that are already fairly permissive with regards to dislocation, arpeggiation, rhythmic alteration and tempo modification. Making the leap to Leschetizky and Pugno's style thus becomes a matter of

degree, while adopting Debussy's approach demands a complete rewrite of his canonic identity and associated performance norms.

The Schumann-Brahms pupils' recordings make for similarly awkward bedfellows with modern understandings of Brahms's hale and hearty identity. While my imitations of their recorded performances are generally met with interest and pleasure, listeners often assume that I copy these traces for the sake of historical authenticity, thus underlining their fixity, pastness and otherness. Indignation often ensues when I reveal that I aim to *embody* something long considered unworthy of such effort: to make these pupils' performance styles part of my own listening, thinking, feeling and playing apparatus as a pianist today; to learn a stylistic dialect from the inside out that can then be extrapolated across other works left unrecorded by these pianists. Because the only criteria for success here is that my style copies simply have to be *copies*, this process is not mediated by current interpretations of documentary traces and the canonic identities such interpretations protect: interventions that tend to keep early recordings at arm's length from the modern musical acts they inspire.

It is indeed often argued that by centring historical sounds in such a dogmatic way I have conveniently avoided vetting them against evidence found in nineteenth-century performance treatises. This is actually more deference than evasion: a number of compilations[430] of such sources are already available, while Da Costa's *Off the Record* focuses on those texts most applicable to pianists and demonstrates their incompleteness as related to the recordings of those who penned them. Da Costa's monograph already evidences a step towards forcing historical documents to prove their value in relation to

[430] For example, see Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750 - 1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

sound, rather than the other way around: a turn that is itself related to recent efforts in empirical musicological circles to shift attention to music's meaning in performance, thus "facilitating the same kind of aesthetic and interpretative study of performers that traditional musicology has lavished on composers."[431]

It is also argued that I do not handle historical recordings with even a modicum of the caution they warrant. I defer again here to the many comprehensive discussions[432] of the history of recording already available: partly because it is a topic best elucidated by those with more technical expertise than I, but primarily because when I listen to early recordings I hear music, not technology. While Roger Heaton argues that recordings are not performances, he does concede that by virtue of their relative lack of editorial interference many early recordings are perhaps something like performances in that they capture the "wrong notes, untidy ensemble or imperfect intonation [that] in live performances are, to some extent, the fragile nature of the business."[433] While the relationship between live performance and recordings was perhaps closest between the advent of electrical recording in 1925 and tape recordings in the 1940s,[434] the recordings I copy are from the years before and after this period and yet it is still difficult to argue that they signify anything other than musical acts of performance.

It is of course important to know what historical recordings can and can't tell us. Simon Trezise points out the limitations of pre-WWII recordings in detecting the range of

---

[431] Nicholas Cook, "Methods for Analysing Recordings," in *Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music,* 241.
[432] In addition to chapters 7 and 9 of *Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music* and chapter 1 of Da Costa's *Off the Record*, see also Leech-Wilkinson, *Changing Sound of Music,* chapter 3, and Roger Beardsley and Leech-Wilkinson, "A Brief History of Recording to ca. 1950," *History of Recordings* (London: CHARM, 2009), http://www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/history/p20_4_1.html.
[433] Roger Heaton, "Reminder: A Recording is Not a Performance," *Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, 217.
[434] Introduction to *Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, 3.

frequencies audible to the human ear, meaning much of what was heard live was lost; the limited dynamic response of acoustic recordings between 1907 and 1925, meaning that pianists had to play loudly and that dynamics could only be modified by manipulating the distance between the performer and the recording horn; the tastes of modern engineers who make commercial transfers of 78s, especially as related to matters of timbral fidelity; the durational constraints of early recordings, meaning that performers often had to hurry or edit their performances; and how playback speeds can alter tempo and pitch. While Trezise argues that, "a recording does not 'show' a performance to us, for the performance that generated the recorded artifact is hidden," he does offer a fascinating account of Adelina Patti's records being played in social situations at various speeds, thereby altering both tempo and key - with Patti herself in attendance.[435] Perhaps it is wise to remember that it is we who either seek or resist the fixity of recorded sounds.

Once aware of the bizarre conditions under which many of the earliest recordings came to be, it's wondrous that they sound like music at all. Pianist Joe Batten recalls recording in a tiny room around 1900 on an upright piano without a front or back that had been hoisted onto a platform so that its soundboard was level with the recording horn. He was then instructed to play double *forte* while someone "who had nothing else to do at the time"[436] held his score aloft. While Da Costa discusses many such scenarios, including the practice of filing down of hammers to make pianos more percussive and the instructing of pianists to play without pedal, he notes that by the 1920s many pianists were recording on grand pianos unencumbered by such circumstances and that even

---

[435] Simon Trezise, "The Recorded Document: Interpretation and Discography," *Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, 193 - 96, 207.
[436] Joe Batten, *Joe Batten's Book: The Story of Sound Recording* (London: Rockliff, 1956), 33, in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 15.

earlier some were recording at home: Adelina Patti's 1906 recordings for example were made at her home, Ignacy Paderewski plays his own Erard grand piano on his 1911 recordings, and pedalling can be heard on Alfred Grünfeld's 1899 recordings and on Pugno and Louis Diémer's in 1903 and 1904.[437]

Da Costa also argues that to deal with limited playback times pianists were more likely to make cuts than to play faster in longer works while shorter pieces "were sustainable both artistically and economically for all 78rpm records, both acoustic and electric," and thus "preserve the normal tempo intentions of the artist." As evidence he cites a number of cases where shorter works recorded by the same pianist on both discs and longer-playing piano rolls are of highly similar lengths. Take Grieg's 1903 acoustic recording of his *Bridal Procession* Op. 19 no. 2 and his 1906 Welte-Mignon piano roll of the same work for example: not only is the latter only five seconds longer than the three minute long former, but both traces evidence the same local rhythmic alterations and larger-scale tempo modifications. It is also important to note that the playback time of 12-inch disc sides was about four and a half minutes by 1903,[438] given that Ilona Eibenschütz's lightning-fast recording of the *Ballade in G minor* Op. 118 no. 3 dates from the same year and yet lasts only two minutes and thirty-eight seconds. Grieg and Eibenschütz certainly had time to spare had they wished to play more slowly. Finally, Da Costa argues that the technical limitations of early recordings weren't much more intrusive than the editorial interventions of today, and that recordings then and now are still "a partial representation of what...musicians would have achieved in concert performance, adapted to suit the limitations of the recording machinery of the day." Like

[437] Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 16 - 19.
[438] Ibid., 20, 22, 38.

Da Costa, I too would say that, "my recordings made on a good day are representative of what I can achieve in a successful live performance. At the very least, my performance style and idiosyncrasies are well preserved."[439]

All of this seems to support the argument that when it comes to performance, "if it sounds like one it is one."[440] If recordings sound like performances then it follows that they can and should be taken as evidence of performance style. It is thus strange that RIP has assumed many of the very legitimate anxieties plaguing those historical musicking spheres that are wholly reliant on non-sounding traces. In reference to repertoires pre-dating recording technologies, Bruce Haynes points out that, "totally accurate historical performance is probably impossible to achieve" and impossible "to know *when* it has been achieved." Clearly, the beauty of recordings is that they are "authentic because, quite simply, they are the real thing."[441] Perhaps however they are a bit *too* real: after quoting Haynes, Da Costa wonders if authenticity is really the point of RIP, extolling instead its usefulness for seeing old works with new eyes, for expanding one's range of expressive possibilities, and for reinvigorating one's musical intuition.[442] While RIP can undoubtedly do all of this and more, when finally in possession of something real why are we so quick to skip recreation and move directly to inspiration?

Caution naturally pervades the performances borne of such exordiums, with early-recorded pianism being experienced and applied through the same veiled, crackling and nostalgic haze that permeates so many of the earliest surviving recordings. In a recent

---

[439] Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (London: Yale University Press, 2004), 28, in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 23, 29.
[440] Leech-Wilkinson, *Changing Sound of Music*, chapter 3, paragraph 107.
[441] Bruce Haynes, *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer's History of Music for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10, in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, xxv, emphasis mine; and Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style,* 240.
[442] Da Costa, *Off the Record*, xxv.

lecture-performance one RIP performer demonstrated how he imbues his own recordings with the clicks, hisses and pops of old records: sounds that seem to have become conflated with late-Romantic performance style, where both are said to be "instantly recognizable as premodern" and "perfumed with the scent of a bygone era."[443] Many RIP pianists adopt a similarly perfumed approach to applying the elements of early-recorded pianism, whereby only those expressive devices that are verifiable by documentary traces or by general trends in early-recorded style are included. This approach seems similar to that bemoaned by Taruskin in relation to HIP, where "nothing is allowed to intrude into the performance that cannot be 'authenticated.'"[444] Much like the digital crackles and pops, such an approach keeps RIP style scented with pastness, without bringing it fully and stumblingly into the harsh light of the present.

The hegemony of the printed word and score has not yet fully given way to sound: if it had, our RIP performances would sound more like their historical models. Instead, and as argued throughout the present volume, such interventions (and the caution and selectivity they inspire) serve only to buttress the performance norms that protect our most revered canonic identities. So what happens when we approach sound with the same meticulousness lavished upon documents, but without allowing the latter to pre-structure what might be gleaned from the former? My style copying processes attempt to do just this, thus sidestepping such mediations: by describing rather than 'authenticating' the early-recorded performance styles of the Schumann-Brahms pupils, and by enacting the intention and extension behind those performances through pure imitation.

---

[443] Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 168, and Edward Sackville-West, "Rosenthal," *Recorded Sound: The Journal of the British Institute of Recorded Sound* 1, no. 7 (1962): 214, in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, xxviii.
[444] Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 72, in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, xxvii.

To my knowledge, the only other modern performer who has systematically embraced this all-or-nothing approach to early-recorded sounds is pianist Sigurd Slåttebrekk who, in collaboration with Tony Harrison, has painstakingly recreated the nine recordings made by Edvard Grieg in 1903 as part of a project entitled *Chasing the Butterfly*. Though Slåttebrekk and Harrison analyse, recreate and re-record Grieg's performances in short takes that are then pieced together through editing (while I analyse and copy first and then record full 'one off' takes), the parallels between our respective projects are otherwise staggering: particularly given the fact that they were initiated around the same time, and with seemingly no knowledge of the other. It speaks volumes for the field of RIP however, that Slåttebrekk, Harrison and I independently came to the conclusion that early recordings were being dealt with in either dismissive or selective ways, and that these tendencies could be avoided (and perhaps also explained) by simply imitating these artefacts as a means of truly understanding the performance traditions they capture. Only through imitation would this understanding be then transformed into inspiration, or newly informed musical intuition.

Indeed, Slåttebrekk and Harrison state that by "examining the components of Grieg’s playing and re-playing them: single notes, turns of phrase, longer sections, whole pieces; deconstructing, re-building, melding and forging," what was ultimately achieved was "understanding through imitation, and imitation through understanding." This understanding is a rich one however, in that performance elements are perceived, deciphered, translated, and become linked to one another, through one's own mind and body as a performer. What is at first only sensed becomes clumsily enacted: an experience that begets enhanced understanding, more focused movements, and so on.

After a while, "muscle-memory improve[s], the subconscious beg[ins] to take over, and some kind of contact [is] made."[445] In other words, as knowing becomes doing and as doing engenders ever-new knowing, our understanding of early-recorded style is "moved from the higher to the lower levels of our consciousness. Or to put it simpler: from head to body."[446] And from body back to head.

Furthermore, early recordings also speak volumes about how past musicians negotiated performances with their *own* minds and bodies: or as Simon Trezise puts it, "historical performers exercised their larynxes and arms to make music: their exhalations and muscular gymnastics live on, engraved in the grooves, metamorphosed by a hundred different movements, electrical circuits, and razor blades."[447] By listening I can imagine how they moved their bodies through time and space to produce these performances, and by copying I can experience how it feels to play in the same ways today. All of this seems to bring to life Taruskin's and Cook's respective claims that, "performances, even canned performances, are not things but acts," and that these acts are meaningful because "they are prompts to performative acts by listeners."[448]

The aim of this chapter is thus to describe a selection of recordings by the Schumann-Brahms pupils so that they may become prompts to modern performative acts: first through imitation, and later through experimentation. Unlike traditional performance analyses that compare, contrast and establish commonalities and patterns, these descriptions are purely functional: they simply seek to establish *what* is being played,

---

[445] Sigurd Slåttebrekk and Tony Harrison, in the chapter entitled "Recreating Grieg's 1903 Recordings and Beyond," from *Chasing the Butterfly: Recreating Grieg's 1903 Recordings and Beyond,* accessed October 29, 2014, http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=75.
[446] Ibids., "Approaching a Performance Style," http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=137.
[447] Trezise, "The Recorded Document," *Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, 208.
[448] Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 24, in Cook, "Methods for Analysing Recordings," *Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, 242.

where and when, and perhaps also how and why. Software will be used, but only to clarify details that, while audible to the 'naked ear,' need extra elucidation for the purposes of producing a faithful copy. While the scores associated with these recorded performances are difficult to avoid, the key is to view them like the agar in petri dishes upon which recorded sounds are allowed to thrive regardless of whatever structuring grid might lie beneath. I also do not intend to establish a new set of general 'style rules' here. As Philip states regarding the use of *portamento* in early-recorded string playing, "it is not as if players simply had 'rules' which they applied, and which we could decide to apply too...[for] this would be to use *portamento* in a modern way." Instead, to slide like late-Romantic players we "have to abandon the notion that 'clean' playing is tasteful playing, and relearn the habit of sliding audibly at most changes of position." Indeed, the goal here is to arrive at a replicable understanding of how these pupils' performances unfold, and to then imitate them regardless of the consequences for my tone and technique: a risky undertaking that will require "redefining the borderline between competence and style."[449]

Since this is a risk I happen to be willing to take, this chapter begins with a brief assertion of how modern performance norms are borne out in performances of Brahms's *Rhapsody in G minor* Op. 79 no. 2, *Intermezzo in E flat major* Op. 117 no. 1, *Ballade in G minor* Op. 118 no. 3, and *Intermezzo in E minor* Op. 119 no. 2. This is followed by detailed accounts of my 'naked ear' and software-assisted examinations of the Schumann-Brahms pupils' recordings of the same works. Only after this process will we be in a position to call Taruskin's bluff when he states that if we really wanted to know what it

[449] Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, 235.

would take to perform in a historical way, we'd "begin by imitating early-twentieth-century recordings of late-nineteenth-century music."[450] Well, that is what we shall do.

[450] Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 168, in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, xxxi.

4.2) Contemporary Brahms Style

My original intention here was to focus on Brahms's late piano works Op. 117 - 119 (1892 - 93), as the expressive content of these miniatures seemed reminiscent of Brahms's Kreislerian youth; because they came into being closest to the time many of the Schumann-Brahms pupils recorded them; because they were composed with many of those students' abilities in mind; and because their brevity and simplicity facilitated the copying of those students' styles and the extrapolation of these styles across other works. Despite being an earlier composition however, the *Rhapsody in G* Minor Op. 79 no. 2 (1879) makes an interesting point of departure: not only was it recorded by one of Clara's finest students, Adelina de Lara, but it also happens to be the very first work with which I was inculcated into the unique world of Brahmsian pianism.

During those first lessons I learned that instead of using a quick and percussive attack in fast and loud material as one might do in Liszt, in Brahms one was to play with a round, deep and resonant tone and attack; instead of focusing on producing a prominent and free melodic line as one does in Chopin, in Brahms one pays meticulous attention to the delineation of inner melodies, powerful bass lines, and rhythmic and harmonic complexities; instead of lingering on poignant details as one does in Schumann, in Brahms one maintains a steady pulse, an inner rather than outer approach to expression, and clarity of structure; and while performance style can be understood as a set of ways

of *not* performing scores literally,[451] justifiable departures from Brahms's scores are those that elucidate the detail and structure *of* those scores.

All of this might be called a contemporary style of Brahms performance: a collection of habits and patterns of manipulating tone, time and intensity applied by a majority of pianists today in ways that conform with modern performance norms in general while also being immediately recognizable as 'Brahmsian.' In order to establish a stylistic baseline against which the approaches of the Schumann-Brahms pupils can be weighed, what follows here is an account of the concrete ways that contemporary Brahms style plays out in the same works recorded by those pupils.

4.2.1) *Rhapsody in G minor* Op. 79 no. 2

To emphasize the unity of the main subject of this work, pianists tend to group its eight measures into one overarching phrase group by approaching the *rit. - in tempo* indication in m. 4 like a mid-sentence pause rather than a full stop; by taking more time over the *rit.* in m. 8 than at m. 4; and by taking unnotated time to emphasize the accents in m. 2 and m. 6, though in a staggered way, and never so much so as to detract from the structural weight of the notated slowing at the end of the phrase group in m. 8. Tonal and temporal focus is maintained throughout this subject with the help of the powerfully driving bass and ringing melodic lines. In the martial transition material in m. 9 - 13, the accented second chords of m. 9 and 11 are further emphasized with slight agogic accents; after which an adamantine rhythmic approach is established over the quickly alternating

[451] Leech-Wilkinson, "Recordings and Histories of Performance Style," *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, 255.

chords, which are played with a cleanly-attacked and -released *staccato* touch; and with unnotated slowing into the fermata at m. 13.

The lyrical second subject is prepared with the slight taking of time over the first hairpin in m. 13 - 14, after which pianists re-establish their original tempo save perhaps for some slight lingering over the change of harmony in m. 16 and to prepare the apex of the hairpin in m. 19 - 20. Pianists create unity within this subject while contrasting it with its surrounding material by temporarily shifting attention away from the bass line, and by bringing out the legato soprano melody as well as the inner lines played with the thumbs of each hand. Many pianists will take time to announce the beginning of the closing material in m. 21, after which they re-establish their original tempo with help from the return of the driving bass lines of the opening. At the end of the exposition, unnotated time is often taken in m. 30 - 31 to prepare the exposition's climax, while the repeat is typically played without any major alterations, further emphasizing this section's unity and structure.

The development section of this work is usually played quite steadily, except where unnotated time is taken to emphasize local details like changes of harmony and dynamics (as in m. 69 and m. 77), and details coinciding with structural boundaries (like the hairpins in m. 72, 80, and 84). At the return of the closing material in m. 85, pianists shift attention back to the bass lines and to maintaining a steady tempo, and away from the temporal emphasis of local details, except perhaps to prepare the *sotto voce* in m. 97. Similarly, while the material in m. 97 - 108 is littered with hairpins and subtle shifts of colour, pianists still play this material steadily, resulting in a kind of anticipatory 'hanging' feeling. Finally, to elucidate overall structure, pianists tend to play the

recapitulation as a mirror image of the exposition. You can hear all of these features in Radu Lupu's recording of this work for Decca (2005) from the CD entitled *Radu Lupu Plays Brahms* in Sound Ex. 4.2.1, while following along with the Score Ex. 4.2.1.

4.2.2) *Intermezzo in E flat major* Op. 117 no. 1

The Intermezzo that opens the Op. 117 set is an intimate and introspective little lullaby that conjures nostalgic scenes of childhood and quiet domesticity, as implied by the two short lines of prose Brahms has included from Herder: *'Schlaf sanft, mein Kind, schlaf sanft und schön! Mich dauert's sehr, dich weinen sehn.'*[452] This usually prompts modern pianists to adopt a glowing, horizontal and coaxed approach to tone and touch throughout the two A sections, within a fairly regular time-feel (or pulse) that is maintained by the gently rocking short-long-short-long rhythmic pattern of the left hand accompaniment. Pianists structure the opening sixteen measures of this section by shaping them into two eight-measure overarching phrase groups, with time being taken at the end of the first phrase group in m. 8, and then again where indicated at the end of the second group in m. 15 - 16. Some local details are also subtly shaped with time, like at the beginnings and ends of smaller four-measure phrase groups m. 1 - 4 and 9 - 12 for example; at the apexes of hairpins in m. 6, 12, and 19 - 20; and at particularly beautiful changes of harmony like those occurring at the ends of m. 10 and 16. After each instance of slowing the original tempo is always re-established, though after the *poco a poco rit.* indication in m. 15 - 16 pianists do tend to play with increased temporal flexibility before

[452] Translated as: 'Sleep softly my child, sleep softly and well! It hurts my heart to see you weeping.'

slowing dramatically over the last measures of the section and making a lengthy pause over the *fermata*.

Pianists create contrast in this work's B section material by cultivating a resignedly sombre atmosphere, and by using subtle inflections of tone and time to emphasize more local details like the apexes of hairpins and the hollow chordal material in m. 26, 28, 34 and 36 - 37. This shift towards the overt shaping of local details creates contrast with the much more structurally-shaped A section material, thereby ultimately elucidating this work's overall structure. Furthermore, despite modern pianists' tendency to play this section more flexibly, its unity is preserved both because this elasticity occurs within a fairly narrow range, and because a clear sense of the underlying pulse is always carefully maintained. Finally, to underline its contrast with the B section and symmetry with the opening A section, pianists tend to shape the A^1 section's musical materials almost exactly as before, aside perhaps from adopting a slightly slower tempo as per Brahms's indication of *Un poco più Andante*, and a dreamier and more heavily-pedalled approach to tone and attack. Here is Leif Ove Andsnes's performance of this work for EMI Classics (1998), from the CD entitled: *Brahms Piano Concerto no. 1 and 3 Intermezzi Op. 117* (City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle), which you can listen to in Sound Ex. 4.2.2 while following along with Score Ex. 4.2.2.

4.2.3) *Ballade in G Minor* Op. 118 no. 3

In stark contrast to Op. 117 no. 1, the A section material of this work is extroverted, martial and robust, and features driving accents, staccato indications, and powerful driving left hand bass octaves throughout. This work however is rarely performed in a flashy or virtuosic manner, with pianists opting for a more solidly muscular and stoically triumphant approach where details of articulation, rhythm and dynamics are all carefully observed, and where the section's structural boundaries both big and small are clearly outlined. An unfailingly regular approach to tempo characterizes most performances of this material, except of course when preparing structural boundaries like the *rit. - tenuto* indications in m. 10 and 86 marking the end of the primary subject material and beginning of the second; at m. 22 and 98 to prepare the final return of the primary subject; and at the close of each section in m. 39 - 40 and after the cadence in m. 108. Meticulous attention is also paid to creating contrast between subjects, with the secondary material being played softly, with a more connected and horizontal tone and attack, and with increased temporal shaping of local details like the accented syncopations of m. 14 - 16 and 90 - 92, and the start of the crescendo in m. 18 and 94. As ever, all instances of slowing are followed by a firm reestablishment of tempo.

While there is no indication to do so, pianists tend to adopt a slightly more relaxed pace in their playing of the lyrical B major middle section: both to contrast it from the martial A section material, and to create the time and space needed to bring out its many poignant details. Most pianists shape this section's material into four eight-measure phrase groups by slowing slightly over the fourth measure of each group (at m. 44, 52, 60

and 68), and much more so over the eighth (at m. 48, 56, 64 and 72). Extra time is also taken where local harmonic and melodic twists coincide with denser textures, hairpins, verbal expressive indications, or the ends of phrase groups (as in m. 46 - 48, 50 - 56, 62 - 64 and 68 - 72). After following Brahms's *rit. - poco sostenuto* indication in m. 71 - 72 thus bringing the B section to a clear close, modern pianists thereafter gradually re-establish the intensity and pace of their tone, tempo and attack over the transitional material in m. 73 - 75 before taking time into the reprise of the A section, which proceeds exactly as before. Sound Ex. 4.2.3 is Murray Perahia's recording of this work for Sony Masterworks (2010), from the CD entitled *Brahms: Handel Variations, Op. 24; Rhapsodies, Op. 79; Piano Pieces Op. 118 & 119*, which you can listen to while following along with Score Ex. 4.2.3.

4.2.4) *Intermezzo in E Minor* Op. 119 no. 2

In the opening A section of this work, Brahms's dual verbal indications of *un poco agitato* and *sotto voce e dolce* tend to result in performances that are shifting and mysterious, though rarely vague, breathless or unmeasured. Most pianists opt for a fairly regular approach to tempo that errs on the side of *Andantino*, while illustrating the push and pull of the conflicting *dolce* and *agitato* indications by using a horizontal and connected legato attack in the right hand material, and a more vertical and detached attack in the left. As the musical material of this section is rather fluid and could easily descend into waywardness in the 'wrong' hands, pianists are particularly careful here to preserve the clarity of its many complexities of rhythm, texture and articulation; they use

subtle inflections of tone and time to both unify and contrast its main subjects; and they adhere to all of Brahms's indications to slow, always fully re-establishing their tempo afterwards.

To further enhance this delineation and demarcation of detail and structure, modern pianists will also take unnotated time to emphasize local points of interest such as the apexes and ends of hairpins (as in m. 4, 6, 16 - 17, 19, and 31 - 32); to highlight interesting shifts of harmony and time-feel (as in m. 13); and of course to emphasize internal structural boundaries in need of extra grounding (like at m. 27 - 28), or larger ones like the final few measures of the section. In all instances of slowing, time is taken both before and *into* the boundary in question. To prepare the return of the opening subject in m. 9 for example, pianists will begin to stretch time over the hairpin and *sostenuto* indications in m. 8, and they will not re-establish their tempo until *after* they have landed on the downbeat of m. 9. This ensures that the structural signposts of this section remain stalwartly upright and clearly defined. While this may seem like a rather tedious point to be driving home here, its significance will become much clearer once we begin analysing the Schumann-Brahms pupil performances.

The first half of the contrasting B section is a charming and lilting waltz whose melody is played with a warmly singing legato *dolce* tone in the right hand, and whose regularity is maintained by the gentling rocking left hand accompaniment. Pianists tend to group the materials of this section into two eight-measure phrase groups by taking a small amount of time over the fourth measure of each group (in m. 39 and 47), and much more time over each phrase group's eighth measure (in m. 43 and 51). In the more expressive second half of this B section however, pianists create contrast by now giving

the left hand much more tonal and temporal authority and by taking more time to expressively shape local details like the apexes of hairpins and the *dolce* indication in m. 60. As ever, the contrast and unity of the A section material is underlined when it returns virtually unchanged, thus elucidating the work's overall structure. Richard Goode's recording of this work for Nonesuch (1987) from the CD entitled *Richard Goode Plays Brahms* can be heard in Sound Ex. 4.2.4, while the score can be found in Score Ex. 4.2.4.

4.2.5) Contemporary Brahms Style: A Summary

So what do the above descriptions of contemporary Brahms style actually tell us? For starters, it's worth emphasizing that they are in no way intended to suggest that modern pianists play these works in the same ways all the time, nor that their performances are uninspired or conformist. They are simply a set of performance traits that do *not* tend to vary from performer to performer. As we will see, the otherness of the Schumann-Brahms pupils' performances lies not in surface idiosyncrasies, but rather in their treatment of the pillars of modern Brahmsian pianism.[453] While the norms below are allied to modern performance standards in general, the ways in which they are borne out and adhered to in those performances said to be characteristically 'Brahmsian' are highly predictable. In general, such performances are *always:*

[453] Sigurd Slåttebrekk and Tony Harrison also underline the importance of understanding the key characteristics of modern pianists' approaches to a particular repertoire when appraising early recordings, as they too have found that the most foreign features of Grieg's performance style "are not at all decoration and interesting detail, but fundamental elements, essential to the way we perceive the music itself, [and] in many cases actually serving as a premise for the composition." Slåttebrekk and Harrison, "Historically Informed Performances," *Chasing the Butterfly,* http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=288.

- **Literal**: Literalism in Brahms involves giving notes and rests their full and proportional value; playing materials that are notated vertically, simultaneously; never adding, subtracting or altering musical materials; reacting to every instance of notation with some appropriate and relative action; and limiting departures from the score to those that serve to highlight the score's detail and structure.

- **Detailed**: Closely related to literal playing, appropriately detailed Brahms performances are those in which a performer displays a keen understanding that every instance of notation exists for some purpose and forms an essential part of a work's meaning and structure. Brahmsian pianists strive to highlight both clarity and complexity of detail in Brahms's notation, while parallel notation is rendered either similarly or in ways staggered to elucidate structure.

- **Structural**: Structural playing in Brahms denotes a fundamental understanding that every element in a given work forms an essential building block of its small- and large-scale structure. This involves staggering the temporal and tonal weight of local details according to their structural value; maintaining consistency of approach within sections and creating contrast between them; and ensuring that both large and small structures are clearly defined through the taking of time at their outer edges, followed by the full reestablishment of tempo.

- **Temporally-measured**: The qualities of literal, detailed and structural playing in Brahms are all reliant on a highly measured approach to tempo, where enough time and space is needed to elucidate details, though not so much so as to subvert overall structure. While unnotated rushing and rhythmic alterations are not permitted, the unnotated taking of time is allowed when used to clarify structure. Through all instances of slowing an underlying sense of the pulse is always preserved, and tempo is always fully re-established afterwards. Parallel indications are to be temporally shaped in either similar or structurally-staggered

ways, while time feel is to be consistent within sections and contrasting between them.

- **Expressively/technically-controlled**: In order to meet the above criteria, Brahmsian performers must remain in careful control of their emotional and physical apparatuses. While all pianists acknowledge the emotional scope and technical challenges of these late piano works, feeling and power in Brahms are understood to be 'written into' the score, and are thus only accessible through literal, detailed, structural, measured and controlled performances of those scores. Expressive and technical control in Brahms also involves a warm, deeply connected, resonant, weighty and clear-eyed approach to tone production in all tempi; with keys always being firmly depressed to their bottoms; with soprano and bass lines ringing out clearly; and with difficult passages sounding resolute as opposed to flashy and harsh, and with lyrical passages sounding introspective as opposed to over-affected and sentimental. In so doing, Brahmsian performers cultivate a serious and even pious approach that disdains light-heartedness and fantasy.

4.3) 'Naked Ear' Analyses of the Schumann-Brahms Pupil Recordings

4.3.1) *Rhapsody in G Minor* Op. 79 no. 2: Adelina De Lara, 1951.

While the powerful bass lines of contemporary Brahmsian pianism permeate all iterations of the primary subject in De Lara's performance, she is arpeggiating many of the left-hand octaves that fall on upbeats and downbeats: by sounding their lower notes first, with their upper notes sounding with the right-hand material. Like modern pianists, De Lara shapes these eight measures into one overarching phrase group by staggering the time she takes over the accents in the second and sixth measures and the *rit.* indications in the fourth and eighth measures. Unlike modern pianists however, she rushes between these indications and further unifies this subject by eliding materials between m. 4 and the beginning of m.5, though determining exactly how requires further analysis.

In all iterations of the martial transitional material De Lara cuts the slur to the e minor chord downbeat chord of m. 9, before shortening the value of the chord that falls on the second beat of both that measure and of m. 11. In both iterations of the exposition she again elides the upbeat and downbeat of m. 11[43], thereby unifying this subject. De Lara also seems to struggle with technical problems here that I suspect are caused by a slow and horizontal attack of this subject's quickly alternating and leaping *staccato* chords. Though this warrants closer analysis, it sounds as though she is arpeggiating in m. 12[44] and 129: a technique that necessitates the close and horizontal motion of the hand, thus suggesting that she is not attacking and releasing these chords with the speed

and verticality needed to execute them cleanly. These technical problems return in the closing material in m. 144 -147, where she again seems to be arpeggiating. Those features of De Lara's performance that require extra analysis with the help of software will be tackled in the following section.

In all iterations of the lyrical second subject De Lara takes quite a bit of time over its first three hairpins while rushing the material immediately afterwards. To further emphasize the apexes of these hairpins, she dislocates the left-hand entries on the downbeats of m. 14[46] - 15[47] and 131 - 133 so that they sound before the right hand. De Lara also beautifully brings out the inner melodic material played with the thumbs of each hand here, often to the detriment of the clarity of the upper melodic line; and she cuts the right-hand slurs just before the second beats of m. 17[49] - 18[50] and 134 - 135 so that they match those of the left. At the outset of the closing material in m. 21[53], De Lara's noticeably slower tempo is further emphasized by the enormous amounts of time she takes over just about all triplet upbeat figures; by her lengthening the first notes of those triplets; and by her slow arpeggiation of their accompanying left-hand octaves. She also rushes slightly after each slow triplet upbeat, and then even more over the crescendo in m. 27[59] before slowing into the final cadence of the exposition. De Lara's playing of the concurrent triplet and sixteenth note figures in this closing material requires closer examination however, as the latter sometimes coincide with the third notes of the former.

De Lara's tempo at the outset of the development section in m. 65 seems sluggish, perhaps due to her tendency to shape its materials into smaller four-measure phrase groups, while emphasizing local details through dislocation, arpeggiation, rhythmic alteration and tempo modification. While De Lara's rhythmic alterations are limited to

lengthening of the first notes of upbeat triplet figures, her tempo modifications involve playing the beginnings and ends of phrase groups more slowly, while rushing slightly over their middles. She rushes more perceptibly however into particularly poignant or intense hairpins before slowing at their apexes and ends, like at m. 90 - 91, 93 - 94, and throughout 105 - 112 for example. She often dislocates left-hand notes (early) to emphasize the slower beginnings and ends of phrase groups, like at the downbeats of m. 69 and 77, and the upbeats to m. 72, 82 - 84, and 115; and while dislocation is audible over the hairpins in m. 72, 80 and 84, further analysis is needed to determine where the notes of each hand fall. At times De Lara arpeggiates the left hand in ways that propel temporal motion, like at the downbeats of m. 65 - 68 and 73 - 75, at the brief return of the closing material in m. 88 - 94, and during the stormier m. 102 - 112. Elsewhere she slowly rolls both left- and right-hand chords to ground the beginnings of phrases that coincide with shifts of colour, like at the downbeats of m. 93, 97 and 115 for example.

There are two curiosities in Adelina De Lara's playing of this development section: the first is what sounds like her right hand echoing the descending G - E figure of the left in m. 83, though this needs to be verified; and the second is that she retakes the tied left hand chord in m. 96. After a long *ritenuto* over m. 116 - 117 she plunges into the recapitulation which proceeds almost exactly as the exposition, except for her significant shortening of the *fermata* in m. 125; her quicker playing of both the transitional and second subjects in m. 126 - 137; what sound like rhythmic alterations in the rushed right hand material of m. 131 - 132; and her shortening of the second beats of m. 140 and 146. You can again listen to De Lara's performance of this work, now in Sound Ex. 4.3.1 while following along with Score Ex. 4.2.1.

4.3.2a) *Intermezzo in E flat major* Op. 117 no. 1: Adelina De Lara, 1951.

At first listen, Adelina De Lara's performance of this work is remarkably straightforward: nowhere, except perhaps at the outset of the A^1 section, does one hear the quiet introspection that so permeates modern performances of this lullaby. De Lara's playing has a casual and 'tossed off' quality that is due partly to her chosen tempo, which ticks along rather relentlessly; and partly to her tone and attack, which is direct rather than gently coaxed. Her playing of the A section also has a stiltedly lilting time-feel as a result of her tendency to 'swing' sixteenth note upbeats in a long-short pattern, and her subtle lengthening of downbeats and shortening of the quarter notes that fall at the ends of local slurs. While all of this needs software-assisted examination, these rhythmic alterations do seem to make her tempo accumulate over phrase groups while also undercutting the gently rocking pattern of the left hand accompaniment.

De Lara groups the first sixteen measures of this A section into two overarching phrase groups much like modern pianists do, but she achieves this partly through tempo modification: by playing more slowly at the beginnings and ends of these structures, and more quickly over their middles. She also delineates detail and structure here by using combinations of dislocation and arpeggiation in conjunction with her tempo modifications. Over the rushed middles of these phrase groups, like in m. 3 - 6 and 11 - 14 for example, she uses much more frequent arpeggiation, spreading chords quickly to propel temporal motion. At the slower outsets of these phrase groups in m. 1 - 4 and 9 - 12, she uses more dislocation and sounds the left-hand upbeats earlier than their right-

hand counterparts; while at their ends in m. 7 - 8 and 17 - 19 she widely rolls the left-hand octaves, though this arpeggiation sounds like dislocation because the lower notes of the left-hand octaves sound much earlier than their upper and right-hand counterparts. This use of dislocation at the slower ends of phrase groups intensifies at the *rit. molto* of m. 20, where the left-hand octaves are played solidly but are now truly disjointed from the right hand. De Lara's approach throughout both A sections is a master class in combinations of dislocation and arpeggiation however, and further analysis is needed to work out exactly how she uses these devices to shape local slurs in m. 1 - 4, 9 - 12, 13 - 16, 39 - 44, and 53 - 54.

After barely pausing over the *fermata* that closes the A section, one is immediately struck by the restlessness of De Lara's playing of the B section. While modern pianists subtly widen their temporal and tonal palette here to elucidate local details, thus contrasting this middle section with its more structurally-shaped bookends, De Lara creates contrast by paying much less attention to the shaping of local details (except for her arpeggiation of the right hand entries in m. 21 and 29), and by using dramatic accelerations to create long sweeping lines that are punctuated by the slower chordal material of m. 26, 28 and 34 - the downbeats of which she further emphasizes with slow arpeggiation. The wayward restlessness of De Lara's time-feel in this section is further enhanced by her tendency to dislocate many of the lowest notes of the left hand in m. 21 - 24 and 29 - 32 so that they sound earlier than their associated right-hand materials; and her dislocation of the right hand so that the first and fourth notes of each figure enter earlier than their associated left-hand materials. The push and pull of these

dislocations lends a lopsided quality to her already restless time-feel, and they tend to occur when she rushes most in m. 21 - 24 and 29 - 32.

Adelina De Lara plays the A^1 section more slowly as per the *Un poco più Andante* indication, but while modern pianists shape this section similarly to its first iteration thus elucidating overall structure, De Lara makes a few notable alterations. She now uses much more arpeggiation over the opening measures of this section, thereby further emphasizing its dreamlike character as suggested by the higher register and *col. Ped*. indication. She also adopts a much more restrained approach to the use of local rhythmic alterations and tempo modifications, and as a result her time-feel is more relaxed and measured here. Indeed, the only 'swung' sixteenth notes in this section occur in m. 46 and 48, while she seems to be holding the quarter notes at the ends of local slurs for something much closer to their full value throughout. This temporal 'straightness' thus contrasts both with the more restless B section *and* with the stiltedly lilting opening A section. Finally, closer analysis is needed to work out exactly where the notes of each hand fall during De Lara's expressive dislocation of the elaborated material in m. 50 - 51. You can listen to Adelina De Lara playing this work in Sound Ex. 4.3.2a while following along with Score Ex. 4.2.2.

4.3.2.b) *Intermezzo in E flat major* Op. 117 no. 1: Carl Friedberg, 1953.

It might be useful to briefly discuss Carl Friedberg's performance of this work here: useful in that he too was a member of the Schumann-Brahms circle; briefly in that his approach is not nearly as foreign as De Lara's. In the A section for example, Friedberg

uses almost no rhythmic alterations and restricts his use of dislocation, arpeggiation and unnotated slowing to the ends of large phrase groups, like his rather forceful dislocations in m. 7 - 8 for example. Where De Lara rushes over the middles of her eight-measure phrase groups in m. 4 - 5 and 12 - 13, Friedberg takes a small amount of time to emphasize and close the cadences contained therein, much like a modern pianist would. Furthermore, because Friedberg's legato tone is gently coaxed and his time feel is highly regular, his playing communicates that introspective glow so seemingly absent in De Lara's performance.

Like De Lara however, Friedberg plays the B section material in a much more impassioned manner than what comes before or after. He too arpeggiates the right-hand entries at m. 21 and 29; he also rushes over m. 21 - 24 and 29 - 32, though to a much lesser degree; and he dislocates the entries of the right- and left-hand figures in these rushed measures so that they sound early, but not so early so as to subvert a clear sense of the underlying pulse. Though Friedberg's temporal and tonal palette in his playing of this B section material is much narrower than De Lara's, these instances of arpeggiation, dislocation, rushing, and this more fervent approach, all seem key to each pianists' understanding of how this section should sound: an understanding that stands in stark contrast to the resignedly sombre approach heard in performances today. Friedberg also arpeggiates more frequently in the reprise of the A section, but otherwise it unfolds much as before. Because De Lara's performance of this work is much less literal than Friedberg's, I suspect that her style has more to teach us more about our investment in contemporary Brahms style. While our examination of Friedberg's performance will end here, you can nonetheless hear it in the file entitled Sound Ex. 4.3.2b.

4.3.3a) *Ballade in G Minor* Op. 118 no. 3: Ilona Eibenschütz, 1903.

Bearing in mind what can and cannot be gleaned from some of the earliest recordings, through the background noise of this recording Ilona Eibenschütz's playing still has many wonderful things to tell us about her understanding of this work. As in modern performances, her rendering of the A section material is energetic and extroverted, and is characterized by crisply and vertically attacked staccato chords and driving bass lines. Rather than sounding martial, solid and powerful however, her playing has a breathless, tossed off and ungrounded quality due to an extremely quick tempo that tends to accumulate, and her conscious blurring of structural boundaries big and small.

Indeed, when Eibenschütz does relent to mark a structural boundary, she tends to slow into its preparation rather than into and out of the boundary itself. In the opening ten measures of the A section for example, while modern pianists slow at the very end of m. 5 and into the downbeat of the new phrase after which they re-establish their tempo, Eibenschütz slows into the downbeat of m. 5 and then rushes right through the downbeat of m. 6. Similarly, while pianists today would emphasize the end of the first subject and beginning of the second by slowing into the downbeats of *both* m. 10 and 11, she slows slightly into m. 10 then immediately picks her tempo back up; she ignores the *tenuto* marking and even shortens the third beat of that measure; and then she truncates or elides material at the end of m. 10 and into m. 11, resulting in an early arpeggiated arrival of the right-hand entry of the next subject. Eibenschütz's blurring of the structural boundary in m. 10 is no accident, as she does the very same thing between the primary and secondary

subjects in the A^1 section at m. 86; at the reprise of the primary subject in in m. 22 and 98; and between the B section and the transition to the A^1 section in m. 72. In all cases, further analysis is needed to figure out exactly how this truncation and elision is accomplished.

Throughout both iterations of the A section material one also notes a lack of contrast between the first and second subjects. While modern pianists create contrast by playing the second subject more softly, with a gently connected legato touch, and by taking time to highlight its local details like the accented syncopations of m. 14[90] - 16[92] and the start of the crescendo in m. 18[94]; Eibenschütz's second subject arrives unannounced both temporally and from an articulation point of view, after which she rushes through all of its details and into the return of the primary subject. Interestingly, while the accents in m. 32 - 35 fall on the first and third beats of even-numbered measures, she emphasizes the odd-numbered measures by eliding their second, third and fourth beats through arpeggiation. As discussed in the previous chapter, these arpeggiations effectively overemphasize the unaccented diminished seventh harmonies that prepare the B section. Although she takes almost no time (and perhaps even rushes) at the close of the A section in m. 39 - 40, she does relax her tempo slightly at the end of this work starting at the *una corda* indication in m. 114.

Ilona Eibenschütz's performance of the B section of this work is similarly characterized by its hair-raising tempo and tendency towards rushing. While she does shape this material into four eight-measure phrase groups, she accomplishes this by rushing dramatically over their middles while emphasizing their beginnings and ends through slight slowing and combinations of dislocation and arpeggiation, though

software-assisted analysis is needed to determine exactly how these expressive devices are used given the brusqueness of her tempo. This means however that she tends to be rushing where modern pianists take extra time to shape the densely packed melodic, harmonic and textural details of m. 45 - 47 and 61 - 63. Notably, she does somehow find the time to emphasize the apexes of hairpins at m. 50 - 52 and 66 - 67, as well as the *dolce* marking in m. 68; and she plays quite expansively in m. 69 - 71, bringing out its tightly-packed melodic and harmonic details through combinations of rhythmic alteration, dislocation and arpeggiation that again need further analysis. Interestingly, in both m. 48 and 64 she plays the double F sharp pick up to the next phrase twice, while modern pianists view this doubling as a consequence of voice leading, and play the note only once. You can once again listen to Ilona Eibenschütz's performance of this work in Sound Ex. 4.3.3a while following along with Score Ex. 4.2.3.

4.3.3b) *Ballade in G Minor* Op. 118 no. 3: Carl Friedberg, 1949.

Yet again we have the good fortune of having a comparative recording of this work by Carl Friedberg. In Da Costa's *Off the Record*, the similarities between Friedberg and Eibenschütz's approaches here are emphasized, with the author quoting Will Crutchfield who also observes that each pianist plays the F sharp upbeats in the B section twice: "First an accompanimental F sharp with the left hand and then a fuller-toned melodic one with the right...[while] in every modern recording...this doubling is treated as an unplayable curio of notation." Again quoting Crutchfield, Da Costa observes that Eibenschütz and Friedberg both use tempo modification to expressively shape their

performances, and while Friedberg's approach is marked by slowing and 'rhetorical hesitation,' "Eibenschütz always accelerates with harmonic tension and retards with cadences." Da Costa concludes by asserting that 'the style is of one era,' thereby echoing Crutchfield who notes that, "Friedberg's performance and Eibenschütz's are as different as night and day, but night and day in the same city."[454]

While Eibenschütz indeed slows at many cadences, they are nonetheless deemphasized due to her tendency to stretch time into their preparation while rushing, truncating and eliding materials at their resolution. In Friedberg's performance of the A section of this work, his rushing over *crescendi* is always fully 'corrected' by the rhetorical pauses he makes before every downbeat, and by his slowing into the preparation *and* resolution of structural boundaries. As a result, the structural signposts of this section remain stalwartly upright and clearly defined in Friedberg's performance, while in Ilona's they are unquestionably oblique. Friedberg's performance is also characterized by much more structural contrast. His playing of the work's second subject for example has a distinctly relaxed and subdued approach to tone and time, and like modern pianists he slows for emphasis over the hairpin in m. 14, during the syncopated accents in m. 15 - 16, and at the start of the *crescendo* in m. 18.

Although Friedberg's playing of the lyrical B section is still hasty by modern standards, it is much more temporally measured than Eibenschütz's and as a result its dense harmonic and melodic details have the time and space to sing. Like Eibenschütz, he rushes over the middles of most phrase groups in the B section and slows at their ends, while slowing at the apexes of hairpins and over the final measures of the section; unlike Eibenschütz, these instances of slowing correct his tempo and the underlying sense of the

[454] Crutchfield, "Brahms," 18, 12 - 21, 60, in Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 98 and 306.

pulse is never lost. As we saw with Adelina De Lara and Friedberg's recordings of Op. 117 no. 1 however, if there are any similarities between the latter and Eibenschütz's approaches here, they lie in the B section. Perhaps this propensity for playing lyrical materials in a rushed and impassioned manner is a similarity we'd rather not underline.

While Carl Friedberg's performance of this work is far from anything modern pianists might call controlled, when compared with Ilona Eibenschütz's performance it indeed seems significantly more restrained, and as a result their performances communicate two very different understandings of how this work 'should' sound. This is however a useful case study into the pitfalls of identifying commonalities between late-Romantic pianists of similar 'schools': if Friedberg and Eibenschütz are equally representative of a Schumann-Brahms school of playing, then why wouldn't RIP pianists choose to replicate Friedberg's 'perfumed' commentary on modern Brahmsian performance norms rather than Eibenschütz's total rewrite of them? You can hear Friedberg's performance of this work in the file entitled Sound Ex. 4.3.3b.

4.3.4) *Intermezzo in E Minor* Op. 119 no. 2: Ilona Eibenschütz, 1952

Ilona Eibenschütz's performance of this work again seems driven by a sense of boundless agitation: her tempo at its outset is already harried, but as in Op. 118 no. 3 it tends to accumulate over most phrases, leaving little room for the careful contrasting and framing of its internal structures. When she does take time, these decelerations never fully correct her tempo and they again tend to occur before rather than into and out of the boundaries of phrase groups. This subversion of structural weight then becomes

compounded by her tendency to rush through, truncate and elide other boundaries. While she takes time into the *sostenuto* indication in m. 2 and at the apex of the hairpin in m. 4 for example, she then rushes through the remainder of those measures and into the following phrases. This approach thus shifts the load bearing walls of the internal structures of this section from their outer edges to their middles.

After slowing into the apex of the hairpin in m. 6 however, Eibenschütz then proceeds to cut many of the repeated figures in both hands until the return of the opening subject in m. 9, though this warrants further analysis. While she stretches time before the *sostenuto* marking in m. 8, in her approach to the return of the opening subject she begins to elide materials through arpeggiation, arriving on the right-hand entry of the new phrase early and nearly on the downbeat instead of displaced as indicated. Even though she draws out this right-hand entry for added emphasis, the weight of this structural boundary is nonetheless undercut. Eibenschütz replicates this combination of rushing, truncation, elision and rhythmic alteration in both m. 11 - 13 and its reprise at m. 90 - 93: the latter of which involves a major rewriting of Brahms's elaboration of this material. Because she cuts a full measure of this score from 91.2 to 92.2, thereafter the bracketed measure numbers in Score Ex. 4.2.4 represent her actual performance.

Where modern pianists adopt a more subdued approach to tone and time to emphasize the arrival of the F major triplet subject in m. 13, Eibenschütz carries on rushing while altering the rhythmic relationship of the hands so that the second note of the left-hand triplet coincides with the third of the right. She again modifies Brahms's elaboration of this subject in m. 93[92] - 97[96] to preserve this rhythmic alteration, now using elision to link materials at its beginning and at the beginning of the alternating

subject in m. 98[97]. In both A sections, she rushes through this alternating subject before again modifying the rhythmic organization of the hands so that the right hand begins to sound as though it falls on strong beats rather than displaced as notated. After slowing into the apex of the hairpin in m. 22 and 102[101], Eibenschütz again truncates and elides materials before arriving on another early and stretched right-hand entry in m. 27 and 107[106]. She continues to push her tempo and by m. 29 and 109[108] her hands become so disjointed that the rising left-hand figures of one measure are still sounding while the right hand has moved to the next. Nonetheless, she slows to emphasize the apex of the final hairpin and over the last few measures of the section. Throughout this section she also uses combinations of dislocation and arpeggiation to ground the beginnings, middles and ends of many phrases, though this requires further analysis - as do the aforementioned instances of truncation and elision.

Eibenschütz's playing of the opening B section material communicates a feeling of lopsided breathlessness: qualities enhanced by what sounds like her subtle over- and under-dotting of the downbeats of the right hand melody, and by her shortening of the third quarters of each measure. These rhythmic alterations warrant further analysis because aside from undercutting the regular pulse of this waltz, they seem to cause her tempo to accumulate. She rushes right through the end of the first phrase group in m. 42 - 43, again shortening the third beats of those measures, after which she plays the bass and inner right hand note early at the start of the new phrase group in m. 44, only relaxing her tempo after this phrase has begun. She then subverts the weight of the boundary between the first and second halves of the B section in a similar fashion: by rushing, by shortening

the third beats of m. 50 - 51, by sounding the bass notes of m. 51 and 52 early, and by only relaxing her tempo after the new section has begun.

Eibenschütz's tempo continues to snowball over the more expressive and hairpin-laden material of the B section's second half, and gains an urgent quality that is underlined by early bass notes at m. 73 and 74, and by the unannounced arrival of the new phrase marked *dolce* in m. 76. She blurs the structural weight of the reprise of this half of the B section by sounding only the top B on the third beat of m. 67, after which the rest of the notes associated with that beat are somehow elided with the outset of the repeated iteration of this section in m. 68. She then maintains her dizzying tempo until m. 81, after which she slows while using combinations of arpeggiation, dislocation and rhythmic alteration that need further elucidation. Finally, Ilona Eibenschütz's playing of the reprise of the A section is remarkably similar to its first iteration, as evidenced by her alterations of its elaborated subjects. You can once again hear her performance in Sound Ex. 4.3.4, while following along with Score Ex. 4.2.4.

4.4) Software-Assisted Analyses of the Schumann-Brahms Pupil Recordings

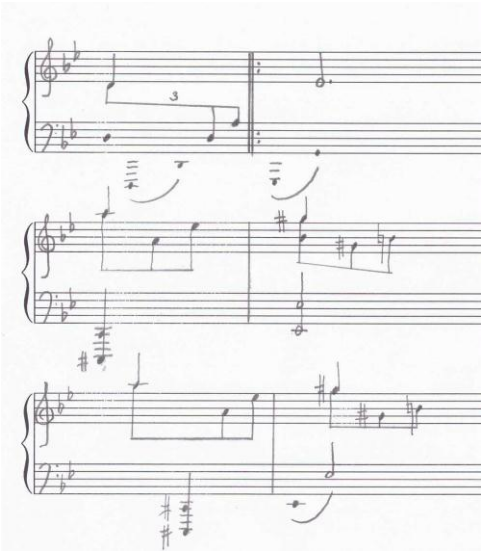
4.4.1) *Rhapsody in G minor* Op. 79 no. 2*:* Adelina De Lara, 1951

In order to better understand how Adelina De Lara shapes her performance of this work with time, Figure 4.4.1.1 shows her average tempo over each of its constituent subjects. What immediately stands out is that she slows over each statement of the exposition as well as the development, the latter of which is significantly under tempo as suspected; and while she begins the recapitulation at exactly the same tempo as the exposition, she indeed plays the transitional and second subjects more quickly than in the exposition.

Exposition	First Subject	1.1 - 8.3	107MM
	Transition	8.4 - 13.3	101MM
	Second Subject	13.4 - 20.3	91MM
	Closing Material	20.4 - 32.3	87MM
	First Subject'	32.4 - 40.3	110MM
	Transition'	40.4 - 45.3	102MM
	Second Subject'	45.4 - 52.3	98MM
	Closing Material'	52.4 - 64.3	91MM
Development	First Phrase Group	64.4 - 72.4	87MM
	Second Phrase Group	73.1 - 84.4	89MM
	Closing Material	85.1 - 96.3	76MM
	First/Second Group	96.4 - 117.3	70MM
Recapitulation	First Subject	117.4 - 125.3	107MM
	Transition	125.4 - 130.3	113MM
	Second Subject	130.4 - 137.3	107MM
	Closing Material	137.4 - 147.4	105 MM
	Coda	148.1 - 155.1	80MM

Figure 4.4.1.1: Average Tempo Values, Adelina De Lara, *Op. 79 no. 2*.

While De Lara arpeggiates most upbeat and downbeat left-hand octaves in the primary subject, with the lowest left hand note sounding early and with the right hand coinciding with the upper left-hand note, she does make a few notable variations to this tendency. By slowing down playback speeds as far as possible, I determined that on the upbeat to m. 1 De Lara plays a D octave with her right hand, followed by a broken octave with her left. The added octave probably serves to emphasize the outset of this work, as in all other iterations it is absent. Using Sonic Visualiser's spectrogram function I was also surprised to discover that in the first statement of the exposition and in the recapitulation De Lara adds a B natural below the top right-hand G# at 7.1[124.1]. Because she doesn't arpeggiate the upbeats or downbeats of m. 7 and 124, perhaps this added B again lends extra emphasis. When repeating the exposition, she grounds this material by now playing the top right hand note at 38.4 early, while at 39.1 the right-hand G# coincides with the upper note of an arpeggiated left-hand octave. For ease of copying, I've written out these variations in Ex. 4.4.1.1 below.

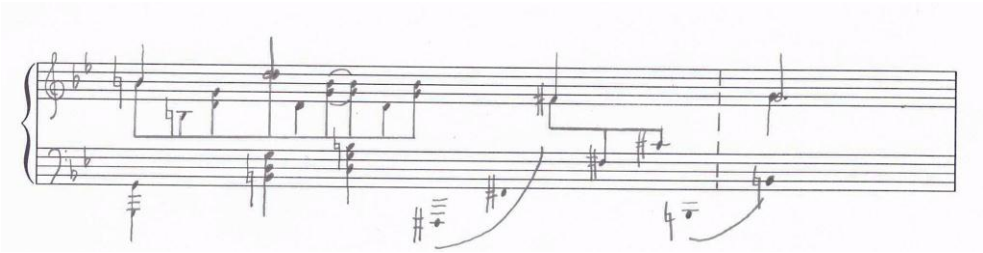


Ex. 4.4.1.1: *Op. 79 no. 2*, Adelina De Lara, 0.4 - 1.1, 6.4 - 7.1[123.4 - 124.1], 38.4 - 39.1.

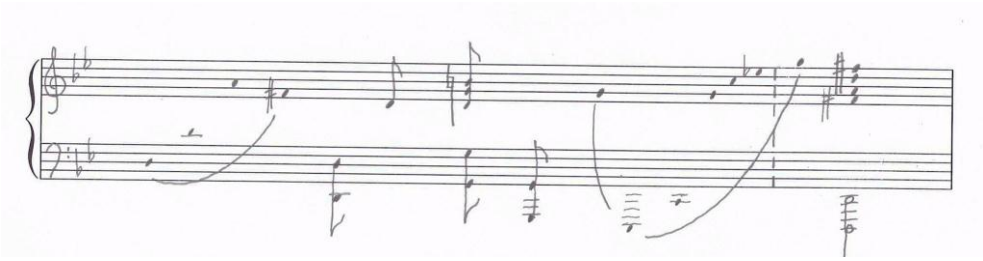
I was also able to determine that De Lara indeed staggers the time she takes over the accents in the primary subject: she takes more time into the second accent in m. 6 in the first statement of the exposition, and more time into the first accent in m. 34 upon repetition. This was calculated by measuring the time elapsed between beats three and four of m. 2 and 6: 0.653 seconds in m. 2 and 0.791 seconds in m. 6 the first time around, and 0.747 seconds in m. 34 and 0.627 seconds in m. 38 upon repetition. Surprisingly however, in the first statement of the exposition she takes nearly the same amount of time over the two *rit.* markings in m. 4 and 8, while upon repetition she takes more time over the first in m. 36: she takes 1.514 seconds to play 4.1 - 4.3 and 1.502 seconds to play 8.1 - 8.3; and 1.463 seconds to play 36.1 - 36.3 and 1.267 seconds to play 40.1 - 40.3. I was initially surprised to see that in the recapitulation there is almost no difference between her temporal treatments of either the accents or *rit.* indications, though perhaps this makes sense given that overall she plays the recapitulation quickly but also more steadily than the exposition.

Indeed, the real story here lies in how De Lara shapes each subject with time. For the primary subject, her average tempo over 1.1 - 4.1 is 107MM while by 5.1 - 8.1 it has grown to 118MM; upon repetition these values now ramp from 105MM to 125MM; and in the recapitulation this subject is indeed played faster but steadier, with average tempo values only ranging from 116MM to 118MM. In the exposition however, this means that De Lara's tempo isn't 'corrected' by the time she takes over the accents and *rit.* indications, but that it accumulates over the primary subject. This cumulative rushing has the added effect of unifying the primary subject in both statements of the exposition, while in the recapitulation this is accomplished with a quicker and steadier overall tempo.

Another unifying element in De Lara's performance of this subject is her elision of the material that coincides with the *rit. - in tempo* indication at the end of its fourth measure. In the first statement of the exposition this effect is simply a result of her somewhat early rolling of the left-hand F# octave at 4.4, with the upper left-hand note coinciding as usual with that of the right. In the repeat and recapitulation however, Ex. 4.4.1.2 below shows how she rolls the left-hand F# octave even earlier at 36.4[121.4], while now dislocating its upper note from the right hand. Then immediately after playing the right-hand material at 36.4[121.4], she again rolls the left-hand octave early at 37.1[122.1]. De Lara unifies the transitional subject of the exposition in a very similar fashion, as shown below in Ex. 4.4.1.3: after playing the last right-hand G at 10.4[42.4] she immediately rolls the chord at 11.1[43.1] from top to bottom, with its upper right-hand note landing on the downbeat.

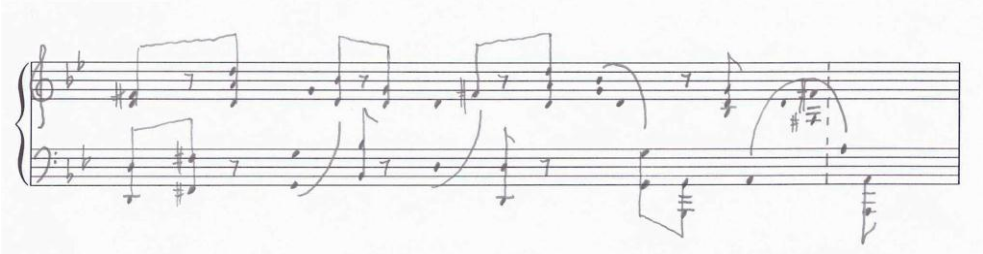


Ex. 4.4.1.2: *Op. 79 no. 2*, Adelina De Lara, 36.1[121.1] - 37.1[122.1].



Ex. 4.4.1.3: *Op. 79 no. 2*, Adelina De Lara, 10.3[42.3] - 11.2[43.2].

I was also keen to investigate whether De Lara's technical problems in the transitional material were caused by a covered and horizontal attack, as potentially evidenced by what sounded like arpeggiations. Using a spectrogram I determined that in both statements of this material in the exposition, she rolls the octave Ds at 10.3[42.3] first, followed by the A and then the F#, as shown in Ex. 4.4.1.3 above. As shown in Ex. 4.4.1.4 below, at 12.2[44.2] she plays the left-hand octave first, followed by the right-hand G, with the B and D sounding simultaneously afterwards; at 12.3[44.3] she plays the F# late; at 12.4[44.4] she plays the right-hand G and B together, followed by the D, and then by a solid left hand octave; and at 13.1[45.1] she plays the lower left hand A early, then the right hand D, then the F# octave, followed by the upper left-hand A. De Lara replicates these arpeggiations in the recapitulation, but now also plays all second and fourth beats in m. 127 and 129 as at 12.2. Indeed, given its quicker tempo and more frequent arpeggiations, it is no wonder that her technical problems worsen while playing this material in the recapitulation. While tempo may be the deciding factor regarding De Lara's technical missteps here, the *variety* of her arpeggiations does suggest that her hands are very close to the keys. While arpeggiation generally necessitates a side-to-side motion of the hand, quickly rolling each chord from bottom to top could easily be accomplished with a vertical attack and release, thus enabling the pianist to reposition her hands mid-air in order to execute the next chord cleanly.



Ex. 4.4.1.4: *Op. 79 no. 2*, Adelina De Lara, 12.1[44.1] - 13.1[45.1].

De Lara's voicing of the inner right-hand melody of the second subject is immediately apparent in Figure 4.4.1.2 below. As she plays the octave triplet upbeat at 13.4, look at the bright glow that represents the loudness of her right hand thumb, with the notes an octave higher registering but a faint glimmer. At 14.1 you can see how she further emphasizes this inner right-hand melody by playing the lower G# before its counterpart an octave higher. Finally, it seems as though this second subject returns faster as well as louder in the recapitulation: while she plays the right hand C# octave at 131.1 solidly, the loudness of her right hand thumb here registers at around -9db while at 14.1[46.1] it comes out at around -17db. While De Lara's shaping of this subject in the exposition was apparent with just simple listening, as was the speed and intensity of its reprise in the recapitulation, the beauty of visualization software often lies in how it enables us to hear with our eyes.

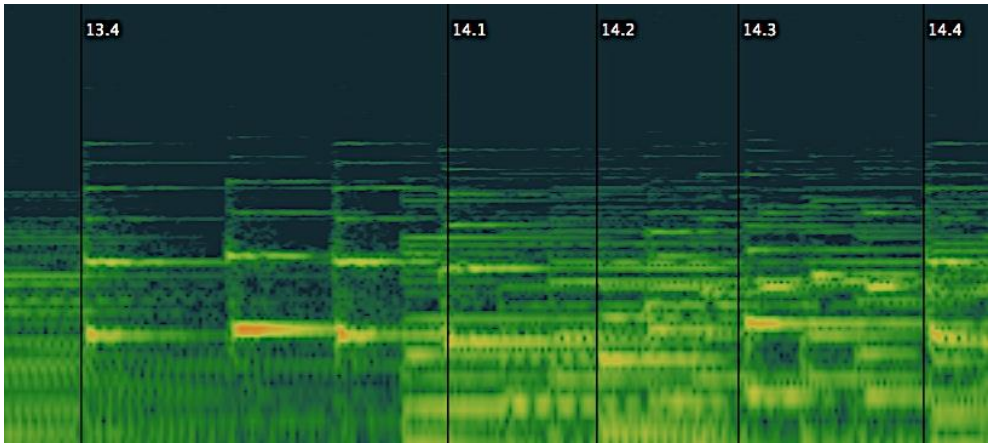


Figure 4.4.1.2: *Op. 79 no. 2*, Adelina De Lara, 13.4 - 14.1.

I was however eager to examine whether De Lara plays the sixteenth notes in the left hand *after* the triplets of the right throughout all statements of the closing material. I determined that when speeding up over the crescendo in m. 27 she does begin to play the left-hand sixteenth note octaves with the last notes of the right-hand triplet figures at 27.4, 28.2, 29.4, and 30.2; and that each rhythmic alteration immediately follows an instance of arpeggiation in the left hand. By playing the left-hand sixteenth notes slightly early, it is possible that she is buying herself extra time to compensate for not having the verticality and speed of attack needed to execute these sixteenth note octaves quickly as notated, as evidenced by her arpeggiations. While she makes this rhythmic alteration only at 59.4 and 60.2 in the exposition, in the much quicker statement of this material in the recapitulation they occur much more often: on all second beats of m. 142 -147; on the first beats of m. 143, 144 and 146; and on the fourth beats of m. 144 and 146. Interestingly, while De Lara arpeggiates less frequently in this passage she experiences many more technical problems. Perhaps what can be said therefore is that De Lara's arpeggiations form an integral part of her horizontal attack, the latter of which becomes

especially problematic in quickly leaping chords as evidenced by the frequency of her rhythmic alterations and technical missteps in faster tempi.

Among the final elements of De Lara's performance needing closer examination are her dislocations in the development section over the hairpins in m. 72, 80 and 84. In all three measures it turns out that she is simply playing each of the left-hand notes notated to coincide with right-hand notes, early. In m. 83 she is in fact echoing the left hand's falling third figure with her right hand; and in the upper melodic material of m. 131 - 132 she is lengthening every other note in a long-short-long-short-long pattern.

4.4.2) *Intermezzo in E flat Major* Op. 117 no. 1: Adelina De Lara, 1951

Looking at Adelina De Lara's average tempo values in Figure 4.4.2.1 below, one can see that in the opening A section she plays the second statement of the main subject slightly faster than the first, before slowing over the transition; that she plays the second phrase group quite a bit faster than the first in the B section, but that she does follow Brahms's indication to play this section more slowly; and that she plays the A^1 section more slowly than both the opening and B sections, only this time she slows over the whole section. Otherwise, there's not much else of interest to be found in her average tempo values here.

A	First Phrase Group	1.1 - 8.6	117MM
	Second Phrase Group	9.1 - 14.6	119MM
	Transition	16.6 - 20.6	113MM
B	First Phrase Group	21.1 - 28.6	99MM
	Second Phrase Group	29.1 - 37.6	109MM
A	First Phrase Group	38.1 - 45.6	78MM
	Second Phrase Group	46.1 - 53.6	73MM
	Coda	54.1 - 57.1	63MM

Figure 4.4.2.1: Average Tempo Values, Adelina De Lara, *Op. 117 no. 1*.

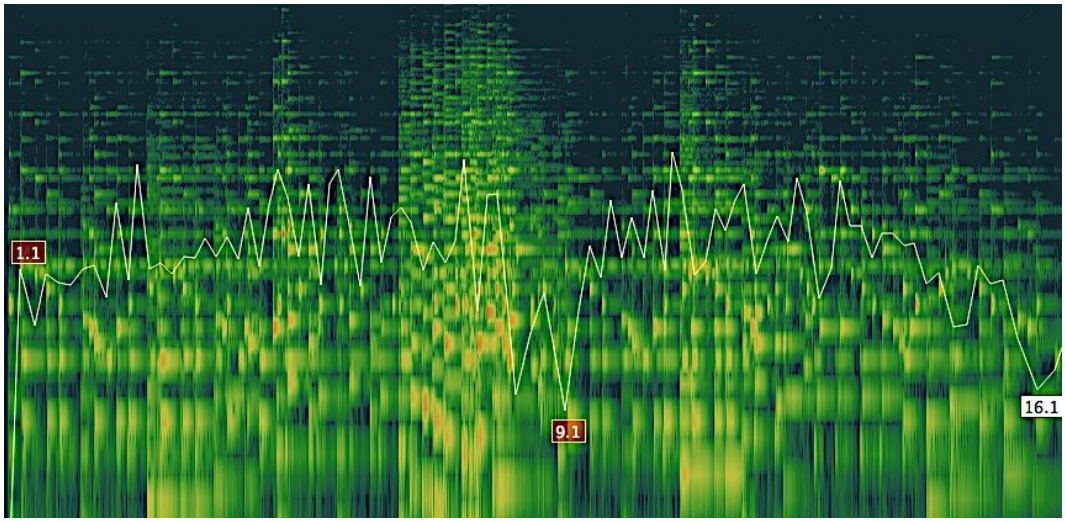


Figure 4.4.2.2: Adelina De Lara, *Op. 117 no. 1*, m. 1 - 16.

The tempo graph of the first sixteen measures of the A section as shown above in Figure 4.4.2.2, demonstrates how she uses tempo modification to create two overarching eight-measure phrase groups: by playing more slowly at their beginnings and ends, and more quickly over their middles. The bright red and orange glow of De Lara's loudness values also shows how the tonal weight of these two phrase groups occurs at the very middle of these sixteen measures: over the forcefully dislocated left-hand octaves at the end of the first phrase group in m. 7 - 8. De Lara's many local rhythmic alterations are represented here by the extremely jagged nature of her tempo graph, though interestingly

these note values even out in m. 1, 3, and 13 - 14 (even though she rushes over 13.1 - 13.4 and slows over 14.4 - 14.6), as shown below in Figure 4.4.2.3 and 4.4.2.4.

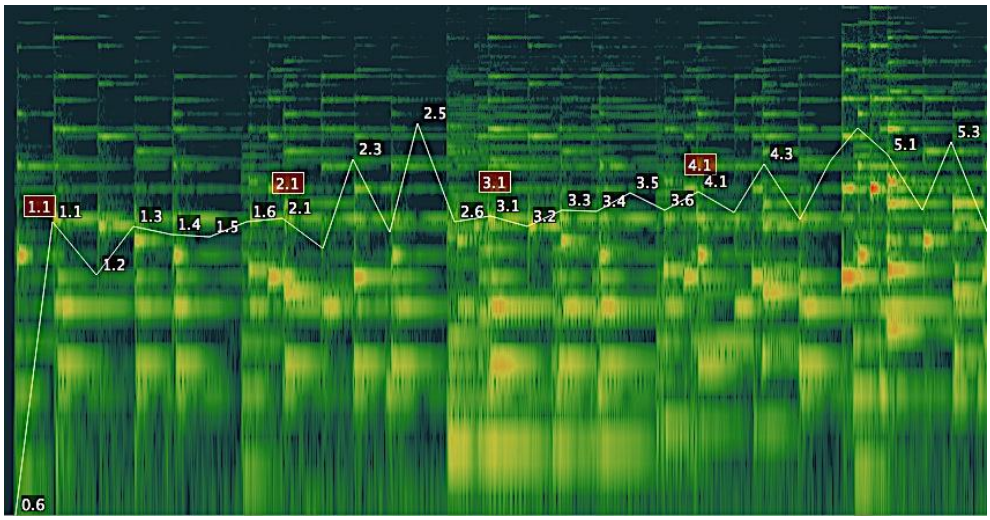


Figure 4.4.2.3: Adelina De Lara, *Op. 117 no. 1*, m. 1 - 4.

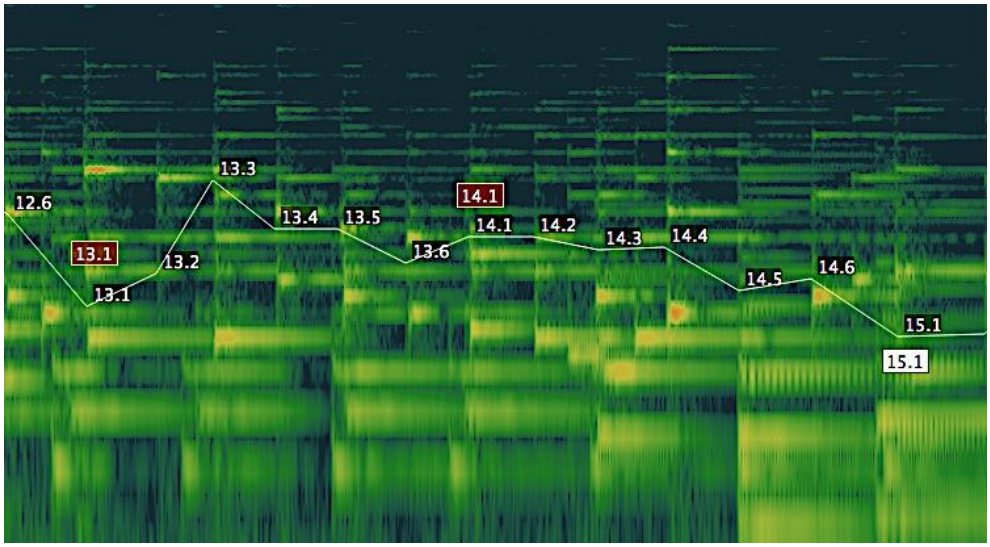


Figure 4.4.2.4: Adelina De Lara, *Op. 117 no. 1*, m. 13 - 14.

I was particularly interested however in how De Lara combines and varies the techniques of dislocation and arpeggiation in these opening sixteen measures. My initial impression was that she shapes local slurs with more dislocation at the slower beginnings and ends of the two phrase groups, while using more arpeggiation over their faster

middles. While it was clear that De Lara uses widely dislocated left-hand octaves to ground the ends of each phrase group in m. 7 - 8 and 17 - 20, at their outsets I determined that in m. 1 - 4 she indeed dislocates all left-hand upbeats so that they sound earlier than their right-hand counterparts, and that she dislocates the third in the left hand at 1.4 so that it sounds late. She then starts to use more arpeggiation as her tempo accumulates, rolling the left hand from bottom to top with the right hand sounding solidly with the left hand upper note, at 2.4, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1 and 4.3. While it was clear with simple listening that arpeggiation coincides with quicker playing at the level of the phrase group (as in m. 5 - 6), this sometimes holds true at the level of the local slur as well. Returning to Figure 4.4.2.3, we can see that the arpeggiations at 3.3 and 3.4 indeed coincide with rushing.

In the next phrase group, arpeggiation is again associated with quicker playing over its middle (at 10.4, 11.1, 11.3, 11.4, 12.1, 12.3, 12.4, 12.6, 13.1, 13.3, 13.4, 14. 1 and 14.3), with dislocation occurring more frequently at its slower beginning and end. Indeed, De Lara plays all left-hand upbeats in m. 9 - 11 early, and plays bass notes early at 15.5 and 16.6 - 20.1, after which she plays the bass octaves late at 20.3 and 20.5. She does use arpeggiation to soften rather than propel the c minor chord at 11.1, but follows this with local rushing as shown below in Figure 4.4.2.5.

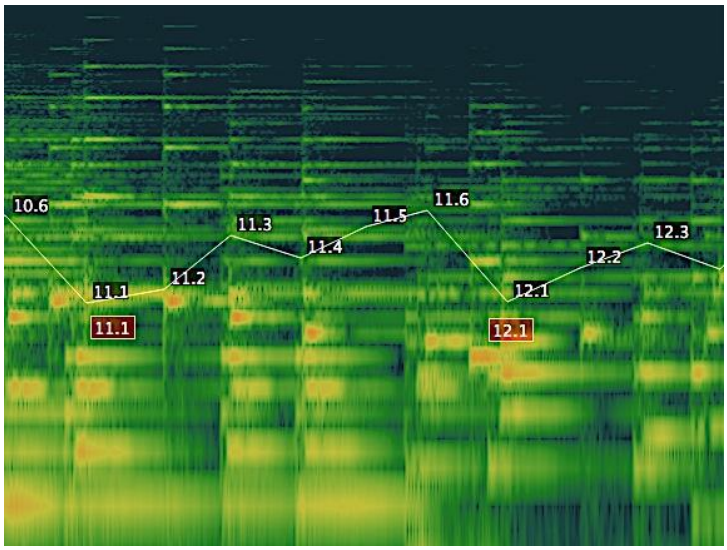


Figure 4.4.2.5: Adelina De Lara, *Op. 117 no. 1*, m. 11.

In Figure 4.4.2.6 below, we can see how De Lara once again creates two large phrase groups in the B section of this work by speeding towards their middles and by slowing over their chordal ends in m. 28 and 34. We can also see how De Lara's tempo is not 'corrected' by her slowing in m. 28, but rather accumulates dramatically over the second phrase group, which is played both faster and louder (as indicated).

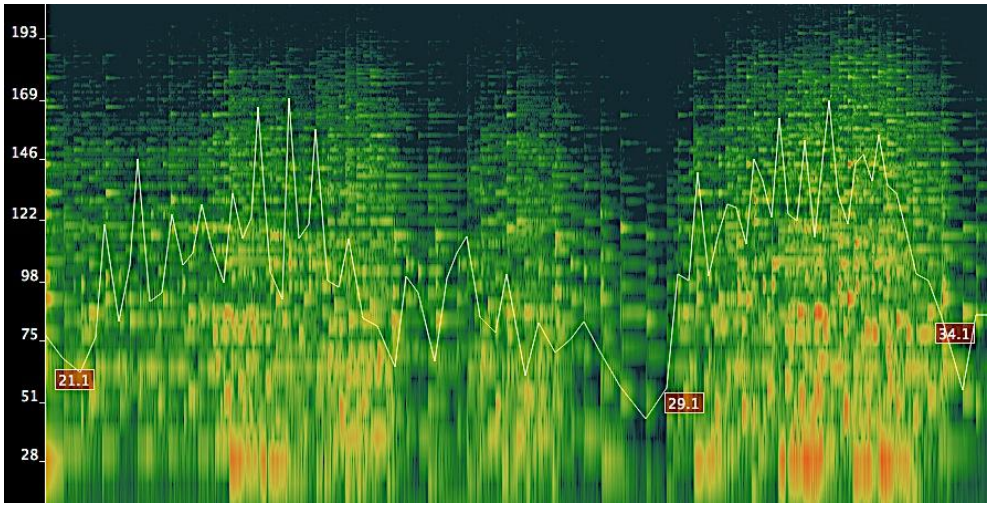


Figure 4.4.2.6: Adelina De Lara, *Op. 117 no. 1*, m. 21 - 34.

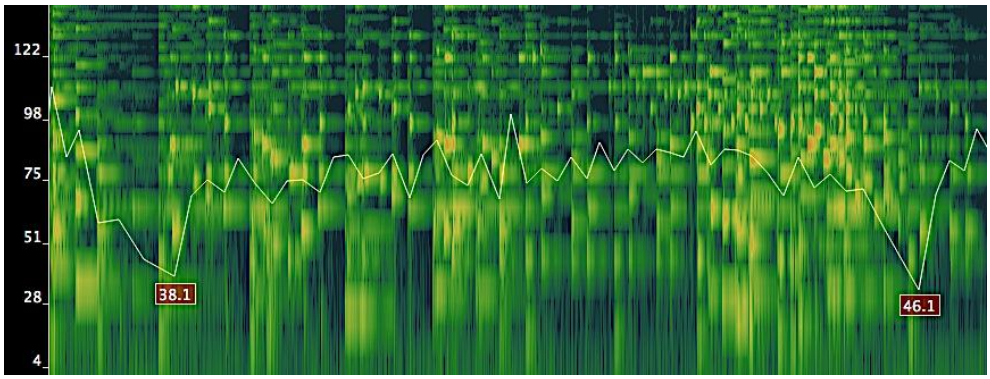
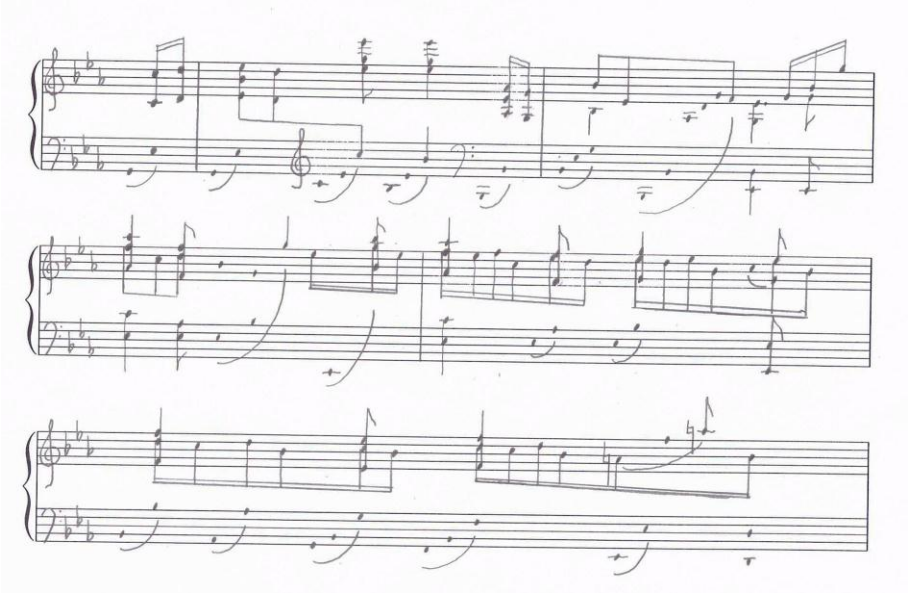


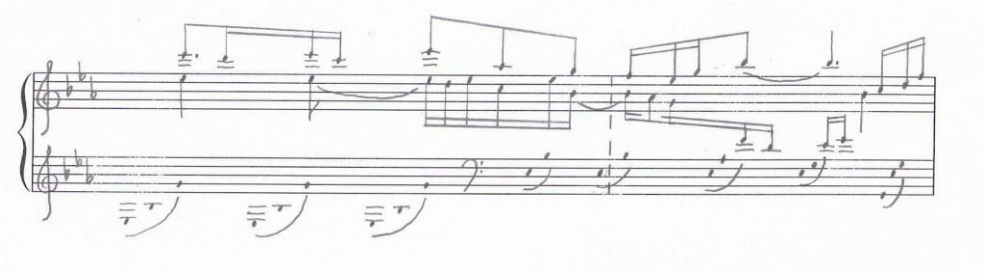
Figure 4.4.2.7: Adelina De Lara, *Op. 117 no. 1*, m. 38 - 46.

When examining the tempo graph of the first phrase group of the A^1 section as shown above in Figure 4.4.2.7, one is immediately struck by the relative steadiness of De Lara's tempo as well as her much more restrained approach to local rhythmic alterations (compare this graph for example to Figure 4.4.2.2). She also seems to be arpeggiating more frequently here as initially suspected. Indeed, De Lara rolls all left-hand materials from bottom to top while sounding the right-hand material solidly with the upper note of the left hand at 38.1 - 41.2, 43.3, 43.4, 44.3, 44.4, 45.3 and 45.4. Variations occur at 41.3, where she rolls all notes from bottom to top, but plays the appoggiatura G before the F; at 42.4, where she first plays the inner right-hand B flat with the left-hand E flat, followed by the lower right-hand G and left-hand B flat together, with the top right-hand G sounding last; and at 44.6 where she plays the lowest left-hand E flat with the lowest right-hand A, then the upper left-hand E flat, followed by the right-hand F and then the top A. The only instances of dislocation here are the early left-hand upbeat at 42.6, early bass notes at 44.1 and 44.2, and an early inner right-hand C at 43.6. You can see 39.6 - 44.6 rewritten below in Ex. 4.4.2.8.



Ex. 4.4.2.8: *Op. 117 no. 1*, Adelina De Lara, 39.6 - 44.6.

After beginning the next phrase group at m. 46 with noticeably fewer dislocations and arpeggiations (except for the ever-present early left-hand upbeats), it was unclear how De Lara was playing the material in m. 50 - 51. As shown below in Ex. 4.4.2.9, right after 50.4 De Lara cuts the top B flat in the right hand, preferring to focus on the inner melody; while after 51.1 she again cuts the upper D before playing the E flat of the upper voice and the G of the inner voice simultaneously. Finally, at 54.3 De Lara first rolls the left-hand material bottom to top, then plays the top E flat of the right hand, followed by the rest of the right-hand material simultaneously; while at 54.6 she simply sounds the lowest left-hand note early.



Ex. 4.4.2.9: *Op. 117 no. 1*, Adelina De Lara, 50.1 - 51.6.

4.4.3) *Ballade in G minor* Op. 118 no. 3: Ilona Eibenschütz, 1903

Before examining the minutiae of Ilona Eibenschütz's performance here it might be useful to take a look at her treatment of tempo in general, as she tends to shape this work with time rather than with subtle variations of dislocation, arpeggiation and rhythmic alteration. In Figures 4.4.3.1 and 4.4.3.2 below, we can see that in the A section she rushes over the first subject m. 1 - 10; that her tempo isn't corrected by her slowing into the *rit*. indication in m. 10 but rather accumulates over the second subject m. 11 - 22; that the reprise of the first subject in m. 23 is played more steadily and quicker than its first iteration; and that her tempo fluctuates wildly over the transition before relaxing slightly into the B section at m. 41.

A	First Subject	1.1 - 10.4	176MM
	Second Subject	11.1 - 22.4	198MM
	First Subject	23.1 - 31.4	188MM
	Transition	32.1 - 40.4	185MM
B	First Phrase Group	41.1 - 48.4	191MM
	Second Phrase Group	49.1 - 56.4	181MM
	Third Phrase Group	57.1 - 64.4	210MM
	Fourth Phrase Group	65.1 - 72.4	168MM
	Transition	73.1 - 76.4	183MM
A	First Subject	77.1 - 86.4	190MM
	Second Subject	87.1 - 98.4	203MM
	First Subject	99.1 - 107.4	200MM
	Coda	108.1 - 117.3	182MM

Figure 4.4.3.1: Average Tempo Values, Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 118 no. 3*.

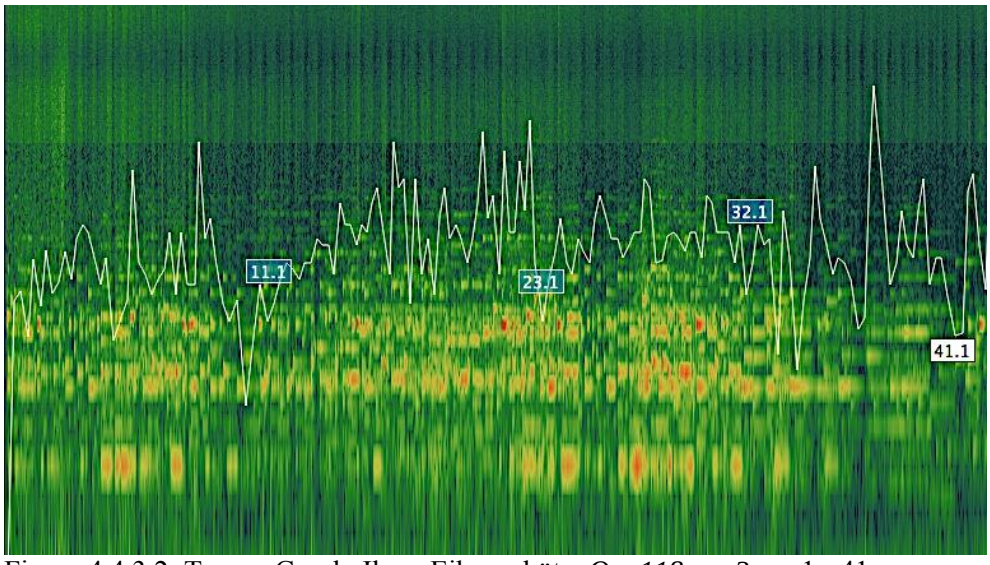


Figure 4.4.3.2: Tempo Graph, Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 118 no. 3*, m. 1 - 41.

Working between the table above and now Figure 4.4.3.3 below, we can see how she takes the B section just as quickly and at times even more hastily than the preceding A section; how she rushes over the middles of each of the B section's four phrase groups; how she plays the first and third phrase groups starting at 41.1 and 57.1 much more quickly, while the more expressive and hairpin-laden second and fourth phrase groups at 49.1 and 65.1 are played ever more slowly; and how she regains momentum in the transition material at 73.1 before the reprise of the A section, which returns faster than at the outset of the work.

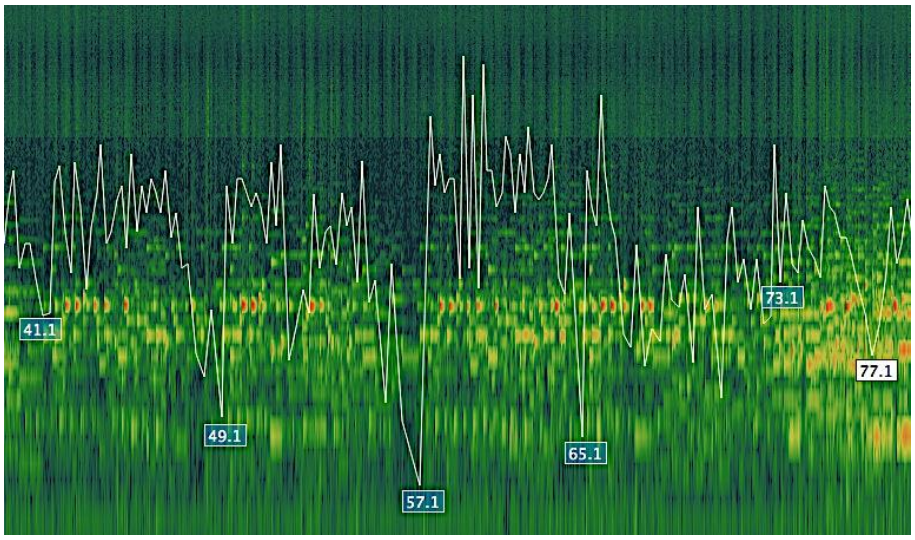


Figure 4.4.3.3: Tempo Graph, Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 118 no. 3*, m. 40 - 77.

Finally, in Figure 4.4.3.4 below we can see how in the A^1 section Eibenschütz again rushes over the now quicker first subject at 77.1, with her tempo not being corrected by the *rit*. indication in m. 86 but rather accumulating into the second subject at 87.1; how the second subject and reiteration of the first subject at 99.1 are played more quickly than the initial statement of the first subject; how all three subjects are now played more steadily than in the opening A section (compare Figure 4.4.3.4 with 4.4.3.2); and how her tempo relents at the *una corda* indication in 114.1.

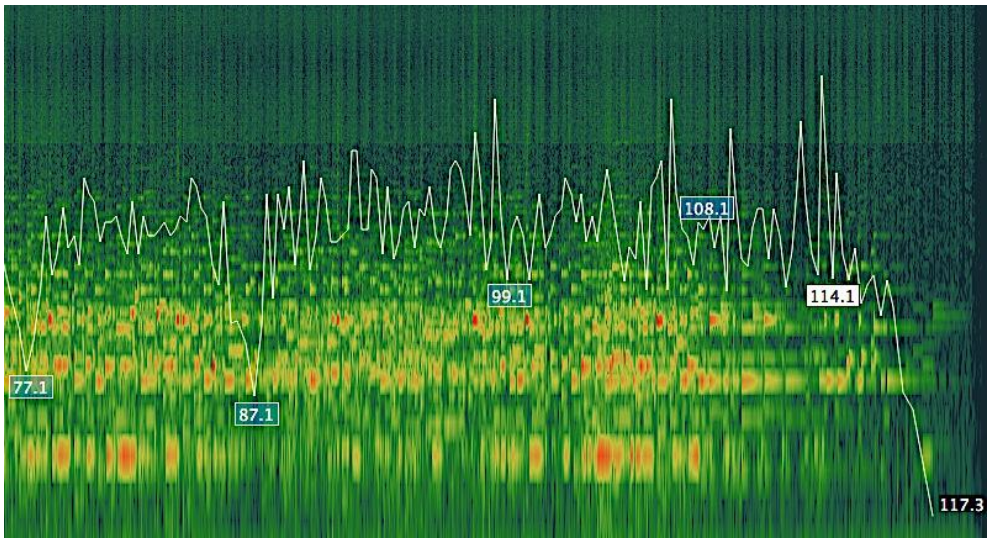


Figure 4.4.3.4: Tempo Graph, Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 118 no. 3*, m. 77 - 117.

This isn't the whole story however when it comes to how Eibenschütz uses time to shape her performance. Not only do some of her most hair-raising tempi coincide with this work's lyrical second subjects and B section, but one could also say that she uses this material to 'slingshot' the temporal motion of the work. Indeed, these more expressive passages always occur between similar subjects that end up faster upon repetition. In the opening A section for example, the average tempo of the primary subject increases from 176MM in its first statement to 188MM after the second subject; while in the A^1 section the average tempo of the primary subject goes from 190MM to 200MM.

In the B section, while the first and third phrase groups are identical (like the primary subject of the A section), it could be said that the second and fourth phrase groups are more expressive, lyrical and musically varied (like the second subject of the A section). Even though the second and fourth phrase groups at 49.1 and 65.1 are played more slowly here (contrary to the A sections' faster second subjects), the former is followed by the quickest phrase group of the B section, while the latter leads to the faster transition material at 73.1 and ultimately to a quicker statement of the primary subject in

the A^1 section. Over the whole work therefore, the temporal trajectory of the primary subjects goes from 176MM, to 188MM, to 190MM, to 200MM; what lies between them of course, are the second subjects and B section.

While Brahms's writing can be parcelled into neat sections, many aspects of Eibenschütz's performance subvert such delineations. If one zooms out on the tempo graph of her entire performance as shown in Figure 4.4.3.5 below, one notices a striking double arch shape, where each arch is characterized by slower playing at its outer edges and faster playing over its middle; but where the fulcrum or slowest point of this double-arch shape occurs just before the third phrase group of the B section at 57.1. Just we saw in her shaping of local phrases in Op. 119 no. 2, here Eibenschütz has shifted the load-bearing walls of this entire work to what is essentially its mathematical centre, bearing in mind that she only slows at the end of this work starting around m. 114.

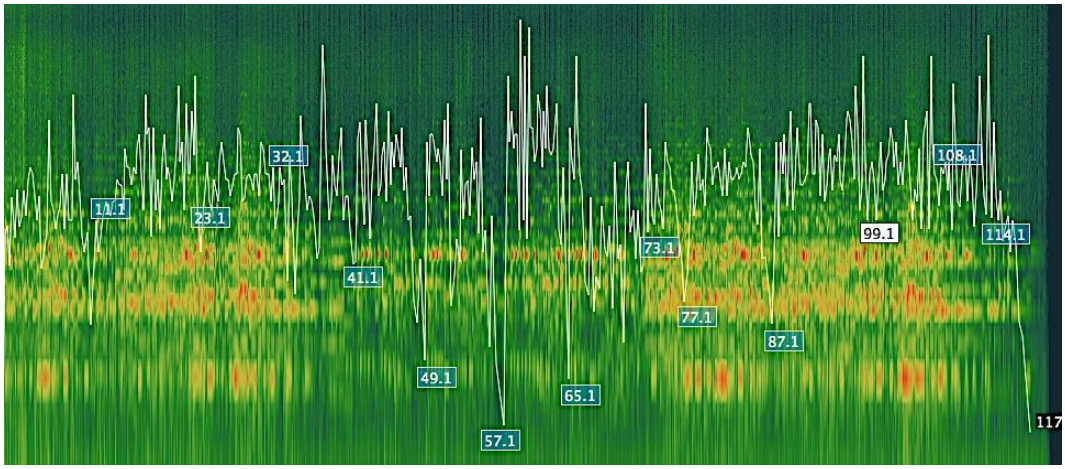
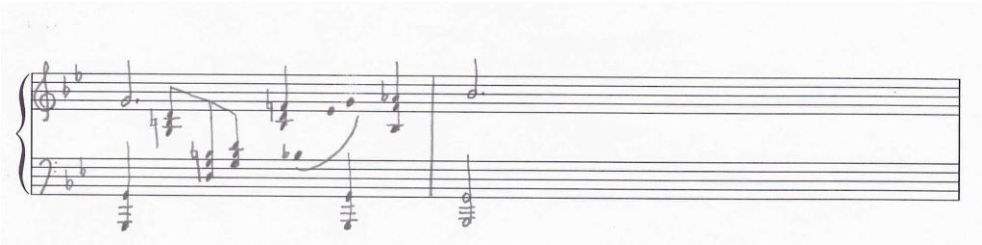


Figure 4.4.3.5: Tempo Graph, Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 118 no. 3*, m. 1 - 117.

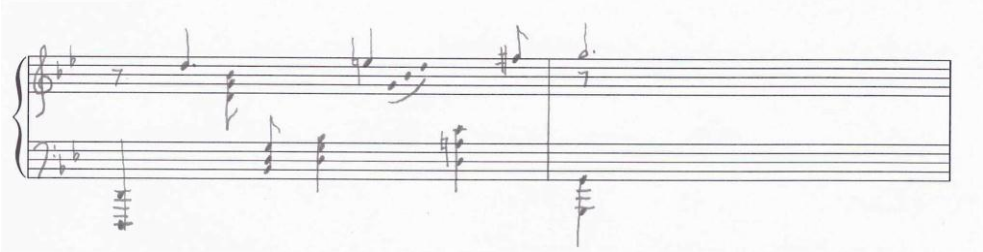
This shifting of structural weight also occurs on a smaller scale, as Eibenschütz tends to truncate and elide material at smaller internal boundaries, and often in conjunction with the few instances of arpeggiation and rhythmic alteration she does use.

At m. 10 and 86 as shown below in Ex. 4.4.3.1, she blurs the boundary at the end of the first subject and the beginning of the second by playing only the Gs at 10.1[86.1]; by shortening the value of the quarter note at 10.3[86.3]; by then immediately rolling the right-hand entry at 10.4[86.4] from bottom to top with the left-hand octave coinciding with the upper right-hand note; and by again cutting out the inner voices at 11.1[87.1], which she continues doing for another three measures. While she rushes over m. 10 and slows over m. 86, in both cases this combination of truncation, elision, arpeggiation and rhythmic alteration results in the early and unprepared right-hand entry of the second subject, thus undercutting the weight of this structural boundary.



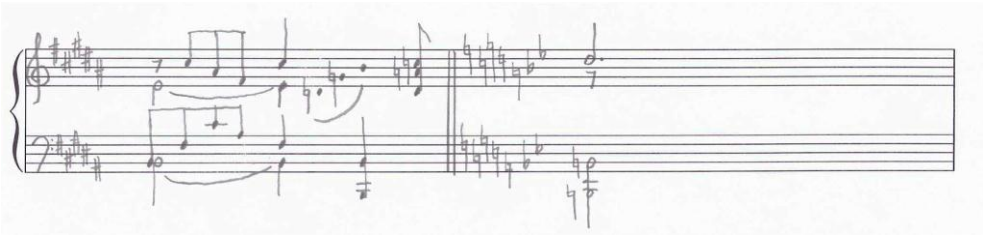
Ex. 4.4.3.1: *Op. 118 no. 3*, Ilona Eibenschütz, 10.1[86.1] - 11.1[87.1].

Where she rushes between the second subject and the restatement of the primary subject in m. 22 and 98 as shown in Ex. 4.4.3.2 below, after playing the left-hand octave at 22.1[98.1] she then plays only the top right-hand D, followed by an inner DGB chord in the right hand, which then displaces all of the left-hand chords so that the chord that should fall at 22.3[98.3] is cut. In quick succession she plays an early and shortened top right-hand E, then rolls the inner right-hand GBD triad, then plays the left-hand chord at 22.4[98.4], followed by only the top F# and then just the Gs at 23.1[99.1].



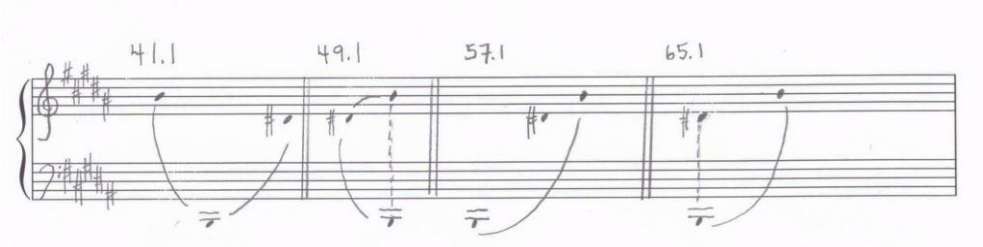
Ex. 4.4.3.2: *Op. 118 no. 3*, Ilona Eibenschütz, 22.1[98.1] - 23.1[99.1].

Eibenschütz is also rushing through the boundary between the B section and the transitional material in m. 72, as shown below in Ex. 4.4.3.3. Here too she cuts the value of the quarter note at 72.3; she plays the right-hand chord at 72.4 early, rolling it from bottom to top and playing the left-hand octave with the top right-hand B; after which she proceeds to 73.1 where she plays only the top right-hand D.



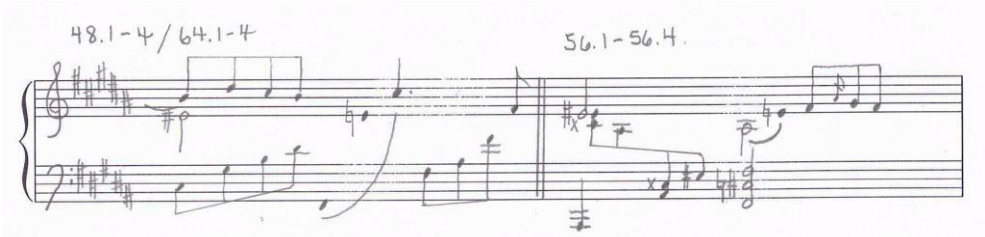
Ex. 4.4.3.3: *Op. 118 no. 3*, Ilona Eibenschütz, 72.1 - 73.1.

Ilona Eibenschütz's only other significant use of dislocation, arpeggiation and rhythmic alteration here occurs at the slower outer edges of the B section's four phrase groups. At the beginnings of these phrase groups as shown below in Ex. 4.4.3.4, at 41.1 she plays the right-hand B first, followed by the left-hand bass, followed by the D#; at 49.1 she plays the D# early; at 57.1 she plays all notes rolled from bottom to top; and at 65.1 she plays the top B late.



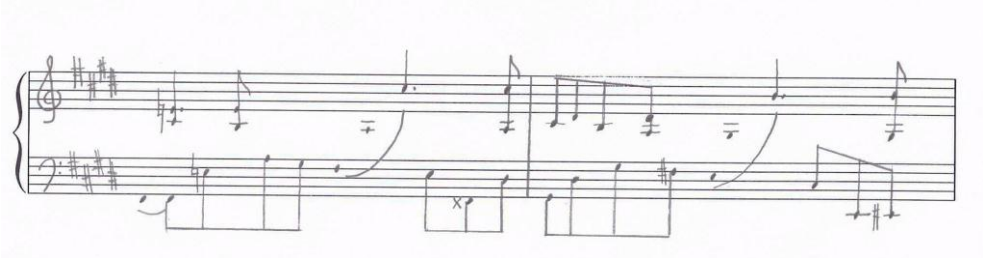
Ex. 4.4.3.4: *Op. 118 no. 3*, Ilona Eibenschütz, dislocation and arpeggiation variations.

At the ends of these phrase groups as shown below in Ex. 4.4.3.5, at 48.3 and 64.3 she rolls all notes from bottom to top; while at 56.3 she slightly delays the top E natural.



Ex. 4.4.3.5: *Op. 118 no. 3*, Ilona Eibenschütz, dislocation and arpeggiation variations.

Finally, in Ex. 4.4.3.6 you can see that Eibenschütz doesn't dislocate the left-hand bass note at 69.1 as I had initially assumed, but rather plays it twice: once early and once with the right hand. At 69.2 she displaces the BE of the right hand so that it sounds before the A of the left hand rather than with the G as notated, then she rolls all notes at 69.3 from bottom to top. At 70.1 she plays the left-hand bass with the inner right-hand C#, followed by the D# in the right hand; at 70.2 she again plays the right-hand notes before their left-hand counterparts; and at 70.3 she rolls all notes from bottom to top.



Ex. 4.4.3.6: *Op. 118 no. 3*, Ilona Eibenschütz, 69.1 - 70.4.

4.4.4) *Intermezzo in E minor* Op. 119 no. 2: Ilona Eibenschütz, 1952

Though the structure of this work's A section material is freer than that of Op. 118 no. 3, Eibenschütz's relative temporal treatment of its many constituent phrase groups still warrants closer investigation. In Figure 4.4.4.1 below one can see the full effect of her tendency to rush over most phrases; how that rushing is never fully corrected by her slowing at the ends of some of those phrases; and how her tempo tends to accumulate from phrase to phrase as a result. Her average tempo during the main subject accumulates from 89MM to 94MM upon reiteration; it then skyrockets to 125MM over the F major triplet subject; and while she continues to rush locally, her overall tempo begins to abate after the alternating subject and through the closing material, the latter of which is played around 99MM.

A	Main Subject	1.1-8.3	89MM
	Main Subject	9.1 - 12.3	94MM
	Triplet Subject	13.1 - 17.2	125MM
	Alternating Subject	17.3 - 22.3	115MM

	Closing Material	23.1 - 34.3	99MM
B	First Subject	36.1 - 43.3	168MM
	Second Subject	44.1 - 51.3	172MM
	Third Subject	52.1 - 59.3	216MM
	Fourth Subject	60.1 - 67.3	159MM
	Third Subject'	68.1 - 75.3	229MM
	Fourth Subject'	76.1 - 83.3	144MM
	Transition	84.1 - 87.3	83MM
A	Main Subject	88.1-91.3	84MM
	Triplet Subject	92.1-96.2	124MM
	Alternating Subject	96.3 - 101.3	111MM
	Closing Material	102.1-113.3	106MM
	Coda	114.1 - 119.1	58MM

Figure 4.4.4.1: Average Tempo Values, Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 119 no. 2*.

The arch-like shape of Eibenschütz's playing of the A section, with its slower outer edges and faster middle, is then replicated in the A^1 section: so much so in fact, that her average tempo over parallel fragments of musical material here are remarkably alike. Compare for example her average speeds over the triplet subjects (125MM and 124MM) and over the alternating subjects (115MM and 111MM). This temporal consistency stands in stark contrast to her playing of Op. 118 no. 3, whose A section materials return much faster after the B section.

Eibenschütz's rushing over each of the phrase groups of the B section results in a similarly precipitous accumulation of tempo towards its middle, with her tempo ranging from 168MM over the first subject, to 172MM over the second subject, to 216 - 229MM

for the third subject and its repetition, and then back to 144 - 159MM for the fourth subject and its repetition. As in the A sections, Ilona slows dramatically at the end of the final statement of the fourth subject and over the transition: yet another point of contrast with Op. 118 no. 3, in that here she slows to frame structural boundaries while in the *Ballade* she consciously blurs them.

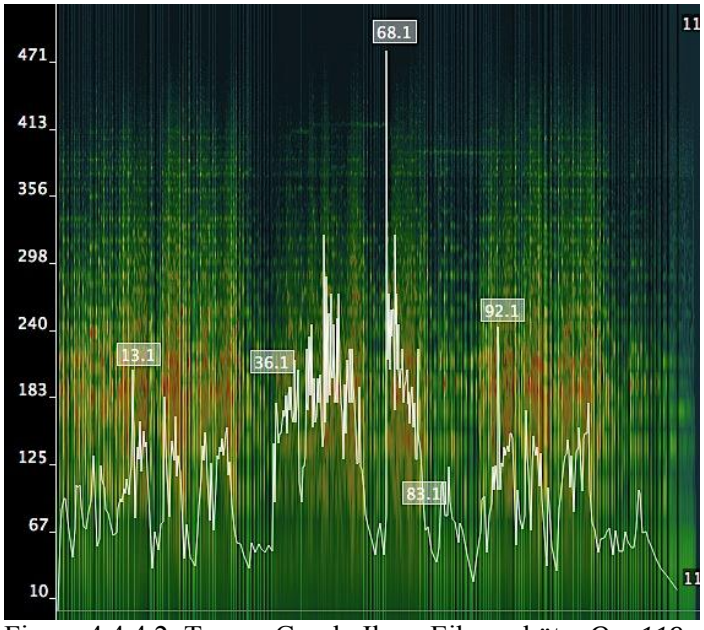


Figure 4.4.4.2: Tempo Graph, Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 119 no. 2*, m. 1 - 119.

This arch shape applies not only to the A and B sections individually but to the work as a whole, as some of Eibenschütz's fastest playing again occurs over the lyrical B section material. By zooming out on the tempo graph of her performance as seen above in Figure 4.4.4.2, one immediately notices a triple-arch shape, where each of the three peaks represents the quicker middles of sections. The smaller outer peaks represent her hasty playing of the triplet subjects at 13.1 and 92.1 in the A sections, while the highest peak in the middle represents her lightning-fast playing of the repeated third subject at 68.1. It is

important to note however that Eibenschütz seems to play this B section according to a verbal tempo indication of *'Il doppio movimento ♩ = ♪'* that appeared in this work's autograph before being removed prior to publication in 1893. According to this indication, the quarter notes of the B section were to be roughly equivalent to the eighth notes of the A section. If you average her tempi during the A section's main subjects at 1.1, 9.1 and 88.1, you arrive at a value of 89MM which, when doubled, is 178MM. Remarkably, her tempo over the entire B section averages at about 181MM.

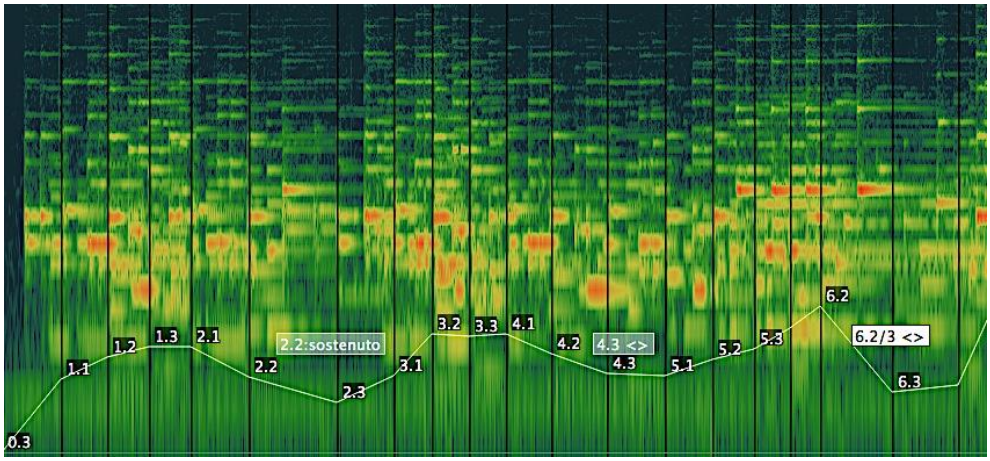


Figure 4.4.4.3: Tempo Graph, Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 119 no. 2*, 1.1 - 6.3.

While Eibenschütz does slow to emphasize the major structural boundaries of this work, she tends to deemphasize the borders of its smaller internal structures. One way she accomplishes this is by again slowing before, rather than into, such boundaries. In Figure 4.4.4.3 above, you can see how she slows into the *sostenuto* indication at 2.3 before rushing through the start of the new phrase at 3.1; and how she slows into the apexes of the hairpins at 4.3 and 6.3 before rushing right through the beginnings of the next phrases at 5.3 and 7.1. At the outset of the A^1 section as shown in Figure 4.4.4.4 below, she again rushes over the main subject starting at 88.1, slows into an imaginary *sostenuto* at 89.3,

and then rushes through the start of the next phrase at 90.1 and into the F major triplet subject at 92.1 - only taking time *after* it has begun. Figure 4.4.4.5 shows how she rushes into the second half of the B section at 52.1, again only taking time after it has begun.

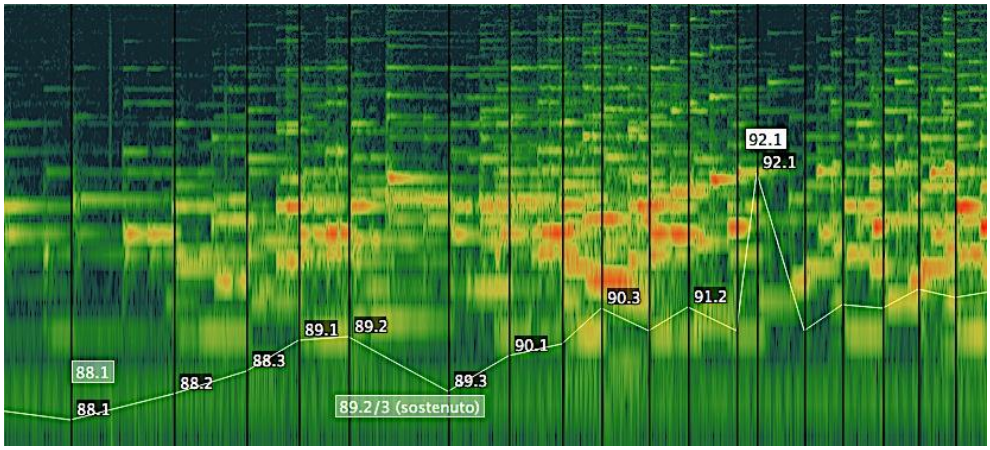


Figure 4.4.4.4: Tempo Graph, Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 119 no. 2*, 88.1 - 92.1.

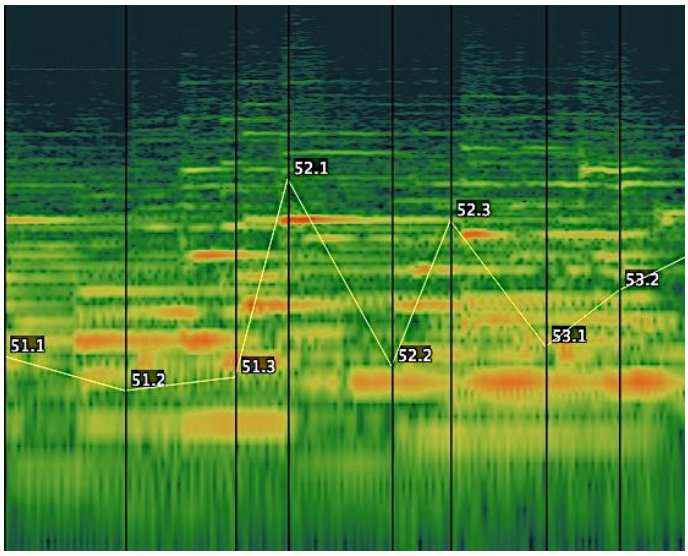
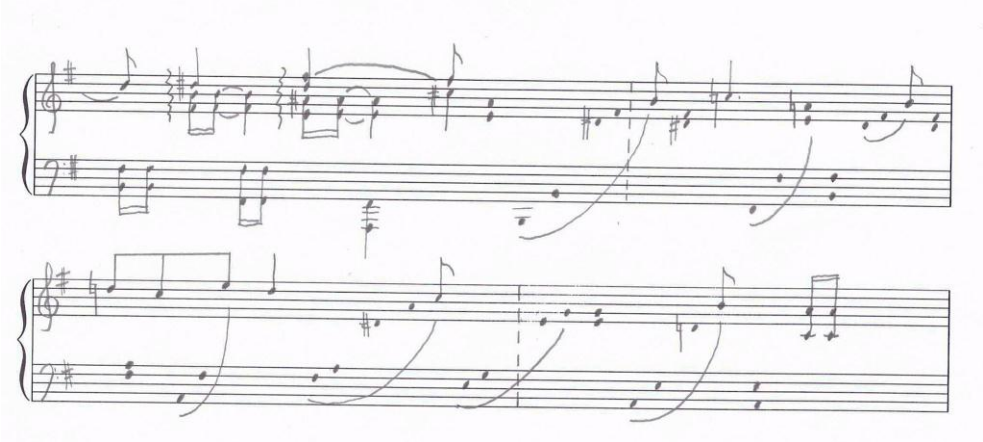


Figure 4.4.4.5: Tempo Graph, Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 119 no. 2*, 51.1 - 53.1.

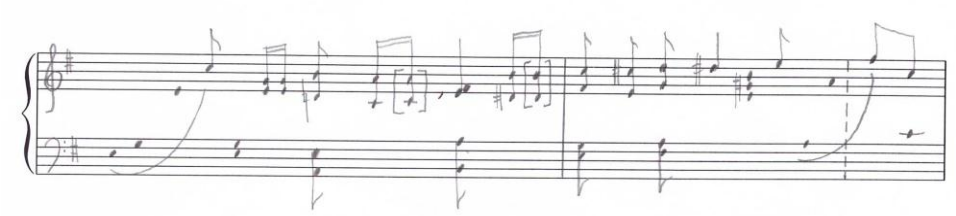
As in Op. 118 no. 3, Ilona Eibenschütz's undercutting of such demarcations often involves the truncation and elision of musical material: sometimes in conjunction with rushing, sometimes not. The first example of this is not associated with rushing, and

occurs between the apex of the hairpin at 6.3 and the return of the main subject at 9.1, as shown below in Ex. 4.4.4.1. After slowing into the apex of the hairpin, Ilona then cuts the second left-hand octave of 6.3, then plays only the inner right-hand C#, followed by only one of the repeated inner right-hand figures. She then begins to roll all notes at 7.1 early and from bottom to top, and cuts the second left-hand octave; at 7.2 she cuts the first left-hand octave and rolls the second bottom to top, after which she plays only one of the right-hand chords; and at 7.3 she cuts the second left-hand chord, then rolls the first right-hand chord bottom to top. At 8.1 she cuts the first left-hand chord and both inner right-hand chords; at 8.2 she rolls all notes bottom to top, after which she cuts the second left-hand chord and both inner right-hand chords, thus playing the top D alone; and at 8.3 she again rolls all notes bottom to top, cutting the second chords of both hands. She then starts to roll the notes of 9.1 early and from bottom to top, displacing the right-hand entry of the new phrase to the downbeat. After cutting the second left-hand third at 9.1 she then rolls all notes at 9.2 from bottom to top.



Ex. 4.4.4.1: *Op. 119 no. 2*, Ilona Eibenschütz, 6.1 - 9.2.

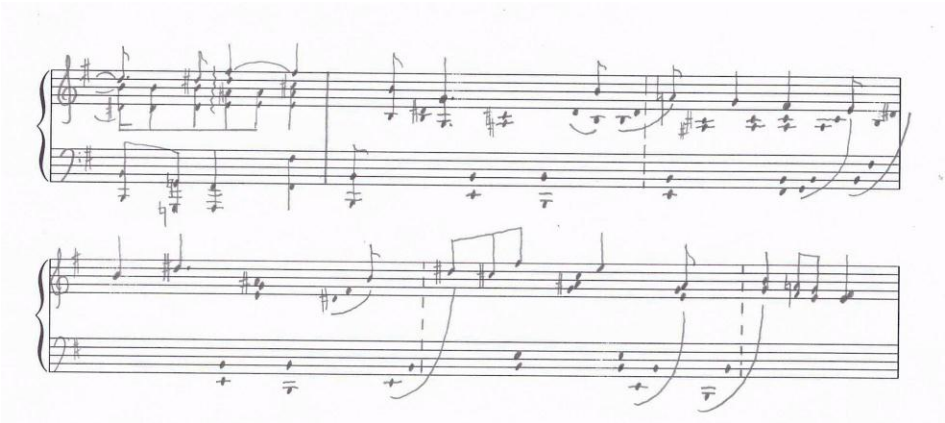
The next instance of truncation and elision occurs between the second statement of the main subject and the F major triplet subject from 11.1 - 13.1, as well as during its altered repetition from 90.1 - 92.1; and in both cases these modifications coincide with rushing into the downbeats of the triplet subjects. As shown below in Ex. 4.4.4.2, at 11.1 Eibenschütz rolls all notes from bottom to top; and at 11.2, 11.3 and 12.1 she cuts the second left- and right-hand chords (though she cuts only the second left-hand chords at 90.2 and 90.3). At 12.2 she cuts the second left-hand chord then plays only the top D#, thus cutting both inner right-hand chords; and at 12.3 she cuts both left-hand chords and plays an EG#B inner chord in the right hand, after which she plays the top E alone. Finally, at 13.1 she rolls all notes early and from bottom to top, displacing the right-hand entry of the triplet F major subject to the downbeat. Because Eibenschütz alters the reiteration of this material in the A^1 section so that it is nearly identical to that of the opening A section, I've included only one figure below with the extra cuts the first time around in brackets.



Ex. 4.4.4.2: *Op. 119 no. 2*, Ilona Eibenschütz, 11.1[90.1] - 13.1[92.1].

The next instances of truncation and elision occur between the end of the alternating subject and the outset of the closing material in both A sections from 22.3[101.3] to 27.2[106.2]. Here, Eibenschütz slows in m. 23[102] and rushes over m. 24

- 25 [103 - 104]. As you can see in the upper system of Ex. 4.4.4.3 below, at 22.3 Ilona plays all notes solidly while cutting the second inner right-hand chord. At 23.1 she plays a single B octave in the left hand and then in the right hand, followed by only the second inner right-hand chord; at 23.2 she plays a G octave with the right hand, then only one of the left- and right-hand chords; and at 23.3 she plays one left-hand octave, then plays the inner D# early, followed by the right-hand B octave, after which she rolls the second right-hand inner chord from bottom to top, eliding it with the right-hand A of the next measure. At 24.1 she cuts the second left-hand chord, plays one of the right-hand inner chords early, followed by the right-hand G and then the second right-hand inner chord; at 24.2 she plays all notes solidly, once; and at 24.3 she rolls all notes from bottom to top, once. She then rolls all notes at 25.1 once and early, displacing the top B to the downbeat.

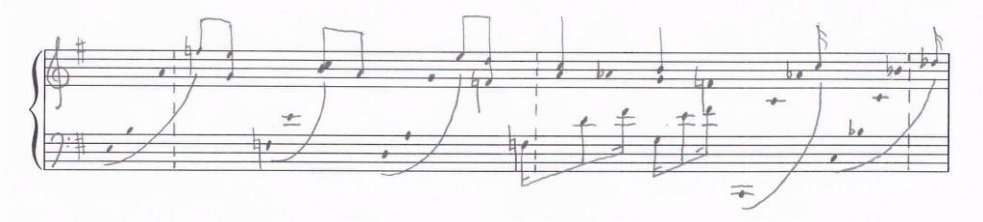


Ex. 4.4.4.3: *Op. 119 no. 2*, Ilona Eibenschütz, 22.1[101.1] - 27.3[106.3].

Now working with the second system of Ex. 4.4.4.3 above, at 25.2 Eibenschütz plays the right-hand D# alone then one of the left- and right-hand chords; and at 25.3 she plays a single left-hand octave then immediately rolls the right-hand chord from bottom to top, once. At 26.1 she begins to roll all notes from bottom to top and early, and cuts the second left-hand chord and both right-hand inner chords, thus playing the C# alone; after

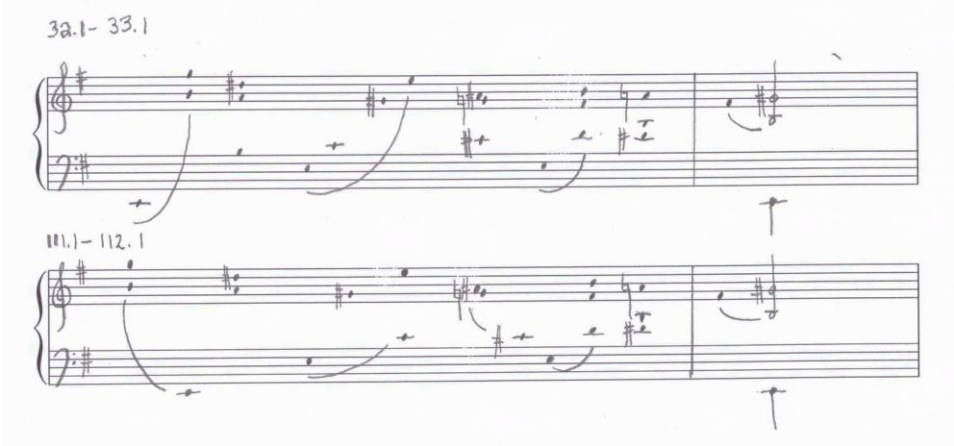
playing the right-hand F# and first left-hand chord at 26.2, she then plays the inner right-hand chord early and once, followed by the top right-hand E and then the second left-hand chord; and at 26.3 she rolls the first left-hand chord from bottom to top, cutting the second left- and right-hand chords. Finally, at 27.1 she again rolls the left-hand octave bottom to top early so that the right-hand third at 27.1 sounds displaced to the downbeat. Interestingly, while Eibenschütz seems to be truncating throughout, she tends to link materials through elision more frequently when rushing: in m. 24 - 25 in this example, and where she rushes into the downbeat of the triplet subject in the previous example.

A smaller example of this correlation between rushing and elision occurs between the F major triplet subject and the beginning of the alternating subject in the A^1 section. Here Eibenschütz elides material while playing quickly in m. 95 and while rushing into m. 97, but not where slowing in m. 96. As you can see below in Ex. 4.4.4.4, at 95.1 she rolls all notes from bottom to top and early so that the upper F is displaced to the downbeat; at 95.2 she rolls the left-hand material from bottom to top, linking it to the right-hand chord; and at 95.3 she again rolls all notes bottom to top. When she starts to slow, she now uses more dislocation and plays the left-hand F at 96.1 early, while playing the right-hand F late at 96.2. As she picks up her tempo she then rolls all notes from bottom to top and early at 96.3 so that the top D flat at 97.1 is displaced to the downbeat.



Ex. 4.4.4.4: *Op. 119 no. 2*, Ilona Eibenschütz, 95.1 - 97.1.

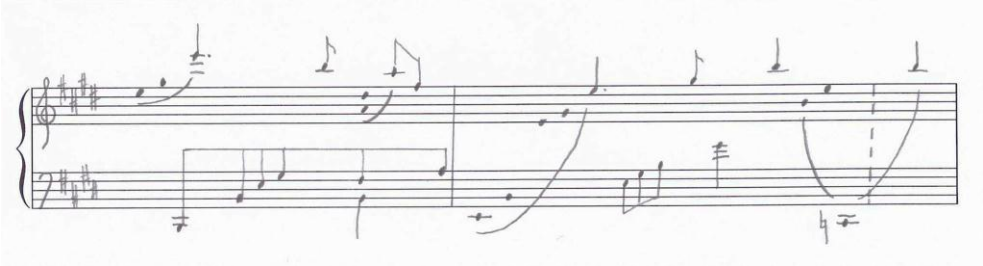
Ilona Eibenschütz uses much more dislocation and arpeggiation here to ground and highlight local details than in her performance of Op. 118 no. 3, and particularly at the beginnings and ends of local phrases as well as at the apexes of hairpins. In the A section, she emphasizes the beginnings of phrases at 1.1 and 3.1 by rolling all notes from bottom to top (in the A^1 section she only rolls the lower left-hand notes at 88.1 and 88.2 early, while rolling everything bottom to top at 90.1). She also emphasizes the ends of phrases at 2.2 and 10.2 by rolling all notes from bottom to top, and at the apex of the hairpin at 4.2 she rolls the left hand, then slowly rolls all notes at 4.3 from bottom to top. And when slowing at the apex of the A section's final hairpin as shown below in Ex. 4.4.4.5, she plays the left hand early at 32.1 (she plays it late at 111.1); at 32.2 she rolls all notes from bottom to top (at 111.2 she plays the left hand E, then the right-hand G#, the C and top E simultaneously, and then plays the left-hand C# late); while at 32.3 she plays the bass note early.



Ex. 4.4.4.5: *Op. 119 no. 2*, Ilona Eibenschütz, m. 32 and 111.

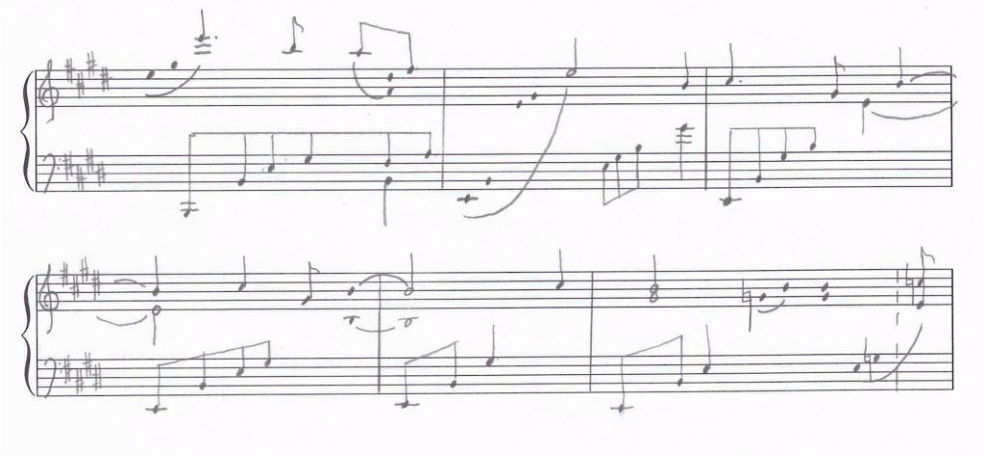
In the lightning-quick B section, most of Eibenschütz's dislocations and arpeggiations occur in the final measures of the fourth phrase, from 66.1[82.1] to

67.3[83.3]. In both iterations, at 66.1 she slowly rolls the right hand, with the bass note delayed to just before the top E; at 66.2 the right-hand B is played after the left-hand G (while the opposite happens at 82.2); at 66.3 the top A of the right hand is delayed as is the final A in the left (while at 82.3 the top A sounds early); and at both 67.1 and 83.1 all notes are rolled from bottom to top. At 67.3 (which leads to the repeated second half of the B section), the left-hand G sounds first, followed by the top right-hand B, after which the rest of the right-hand notes are rolled and elided with an early bass note at 68.1, followed by a retaking of the top right hand B. In Ex. 4.4.4.6 below you will find the first iteration of this material, while its varied repetition can be found in the first measure of Ex. 4.4.4.7.



Ex. 4.4.4.6: *Op. 119 no. 2*, Ilona Eibenschütz, 67.1 - 68.1.

In the transitional material that begins in the second measure of Ex. 4.4.4.7 below, at 84.2 Eibenschütz plays the G of the right hand late; at 84.3 she plays the E early; and at 85.3 she plays the right-hand G followed by a B octave in the same hand, which is carried over to 86.1. At 87.1 the left hand is played early, after which she adds a B in the right hand above the G#. In the final statement of this transitional material, she rolls all notes from bottom to top at 115.1; at 115.2 she again plays the right-hand G late; and she plays the right-hand notes early at 116.2 and 118.1, and late at 118.3.



Ex. 4.4.4.7: *Op. 119 no. 2*, Ilona Eibenschütz, 82.1 - 88.1.

The very last issue to clarify before this performance can be copied is the matter of Ilona Eibenschütz's rhythmic alterations in the first half of the B section. While my initial impression was that the melodic eighth notes were sometimes being played early and sometimes late, it turns out that all are played simultaneously with the left hand, except in m. 40 and 44 where they are probably delayed in order to emphasize the beginnings of new phrases. The eighths at the end of the section in m. 50 - 51 are similarly delayed for emphasis, while the only early eighth note occurs in m. 49. Thus while Eibenschütz seems to be over-dotting a few downbeats for extra emphasis, she doesn't seem to be under-dotting others in any significant way.

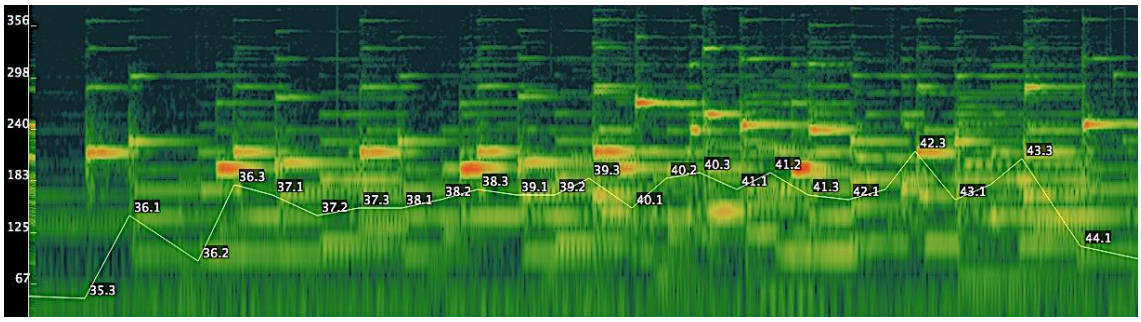


Figure 4.4.4.6: Tempo Graph, Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 119 no. 2*, m. 36 - 43.

I also suspected that some quarter notes at the ends of measures in this first half of the B section were being played early. If we look at Eibenschütz's tempo graph over the first phrase group m. 36 - 43 as shown above in Figure 4.4.4.6, we see that the third beat of each measure (except 41.3) is indeed associated with an upward spike, meaning that it has sounded earlier than predicted relative to the timings of the notes that precede it. With the exception of this phrase group's opening two measures however, whose early third quarters do seem to be a result of rhythmic alteration, in general these spikes appear to be a symptom of Eibenschütz's tendency to rush over most measures, as in m. 38 - 40 and m. 42 - 43 for example. In the next phrase group as shown in Figure 4.4.4.7, here too we see pronouncedly early quarters resulting from rhythmic alteration at its beginning in m. 44, 46 and 47, and now also at its end in m. 51 - 52; with quarters coming early as a result of rushing over its middle in m. 48 - 50.

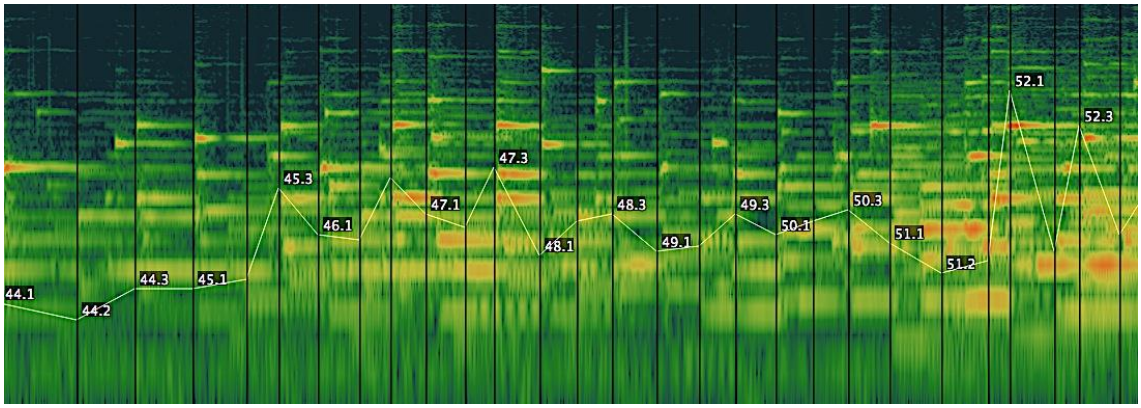


Figure 4.4.4.7: Tempo Graph, Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 119 no. 2*, m. 44 - 52.

As for the lengths of these third quarters, my initial impression that they were being shortened doesn't seem to hold true. Beats marked .1 seem generally associated here with downward dips in the tempo graph, meaning that they come later than expected - not earlier. To be certain, I calculated the lengths of these third quarters by measuring

the time elapsed between beats marked .3 and .1. As shown in Figure 4.4.4.8 below, the lengths of these quarters hover around 0.36 seconds, and while the longer values at 38.3, 43.3 and 44.3 all coincide with the ends or beginnings of phrases, the short value at 51.3 coincides with Eibenschütz's rushing into the second half of the B section. Otherwise, there's no significant pattern related to how these values either increase or decrease over time. In general therefore, the lilting and breathless feel of Ilona Eibenschütz's playing here is probably a result of her local rhythmic alterations at the beginnings and ends of phrase groups, and her small- and large-scale rushing throughout.

36.3	0.36
37.3	0.39
38.3	0.75
39.3	0.39
40.3	0.35
41.3	0.37
42.3	0.37
43.3	0.55
44.3	0.49
45.3	0.34
46.3	0.30
47.3	0.38
48.3	0.37
49.3	0.33
50.3	0.35
51.3	0.19

Figure 4.4.4.8: Ilona Eibenschütz, *Op. 119 no. 2*, lengths of third beats m. 36 - 51.

5) Tests and Experiments in Early-Recorded Brahms Style

5.1) Copying the Recordings of the Schumann-Brahms Pupils

5.1.1) Op. 79 no. 2, Adelina De Lara

When copying Adelina De Lara's performance of this work, among the least difficult elements to incorporate are the many arpeggiated left-hand octaves. Whether rolled quickly to propel temporal motion or slowly to ground it, they generally involve sounding the lowest note first, playing the associated right-hand material with the upper note, and thus starting the roll slightly before where you want the right-hand material to sound. What takes getting used to however, is how arpeggiation changes the orientation of the left hand as you navigate the spaces between these octaves. When playing them solidly one tends to lead with the left-hand thumb: it is both stronger and closer to the centre of one's field of vision, making it easier to visually track while leaping from octave to octave. Leading with the thumb in this way both encourages and is helped by a vertical attack and release where, with the help of the pedal, octaves are released immediately after being played in order to reposition the hand mid-air while moving to the next. Arpeggiation on the other hand requires a horizontal movement; it forces the hand to follow the lead of the weaker and more distant fifth finger; it lengthens the amount of time one's hand remains in position; and it thus affords less time to release and reposition the hand in order to reach the next octave in a timely and reliable fashion. In

slower material however, problems of accuracy and timing can soon be overcome with practice, and before long it is tempting to arpeggiate even where De Lara doesn't.

Things can become more perilous at quicker tempi and when these arpeggiated octaves occur in quick succession with other octaves either rolled or not. De Lara's technical problems and early playing of some left-hand sixteenth note octaves in the closing material of the exposition and recapitulation seem symptomatic of precisely this situation: m. 27 - 30 and 142 - 47 feature rushing as well as sixteenth note octaves sandwiched between one rolled dotted eighth note octave and one solid quarter note octave. In a way, De Lara's arpeggiations could be said to both hinder and help here: on one hand, they require a horizontal motion of the hand, they force the left-hand fifth finger to navigate, and they lengthen the amount of time that the hand must remain in position when it could otherwise be released, moved, and repositioned for the next octave. On the other hand, arpeggiation means that by lingering in position on the rolled dotted eighth note octave your hand is already there to play an early sixteenth note octave, which in turn gives you extra time to accurately reach the quarter note octave. Having tried to play this material with and without early sixteenth notes at De Lara's speeds however, it seems that no amount of rhythmic alteration can overcome the extent to which arpeggiation impedes one's ability to play quickly and accurately. As such, while Lara's rushing and arpeggiations are to blame for her technical problems, the early sixteenth notes seem like an attempt to regain a modicum of security.

Another counterintuitive aspect of De Lara's performance style here is how she shapes materials with time on a local level. In the primary subject for example, after slightly drawing out the beginnings of upbeats, she immediately rushes through the first,

second and third beats of nearly every measure. As a result, one has the impression that time is briefly suspended at upbeats, before it 'swings' into and through the material that follows. While it is fairly easy to replicate De Lara's stretching of time over the upbeats, accents and *rit*. indications of this subject, as well as her rushing between them, it is oddly difficult to resist the temptation of emphasizing downbeats with time. Indeed, when modern pianists accentuate upbeats in such a way, our ears are trained to expect that the following downbeat will be similarly emphasized. Because De Lara's upbeats thus seem to initiate a temporal impulse that is left unfulfilled, when imitating her performance it is quite difficult not to somehow fill in this 'missing' time. The rolled left-hand octaves at many downbeats only intensify the impulse to cheat here, but the key seems to be to roll them early and quickly in order to propel rather than ground temporal motion. Indeed, if one were to only stretch upbeats and rush between them while emphasizing downbeats in a modern way, the resulting time feel would be quite different from De Lara's. Lengthened downbeats would both 'correct' the rushing just before and after, while fulfilling the anticipatory impulse initiated by lengthened upbeats, thereby preserving a regular sense of pulse.

One faces a similar issue in the second subject, where the temptation to ground downbeats is particularly strong due to the subject's lyrical nature and the presence of both early left-hand bass notes and an early inner right-hand note at the subject's outset. The trick however again seems to be to play these dislocations early and quickly in order to shorten rather than widen the temporal berth of the downbeats. Furthermore, it also seems important that the early-dislocated left-hand bass notes are immediately followed by their following rising figures, meaning that the right-hand material coincides with the

second or third notes of those figures. In other words, if you sound the left-hand bass note early and then wait for the right hand before continuing with the rising left-hand figure, you will have effectively emphasized the downbeat where De Lara does not. In order to accomplish this free overlapping of otherwise discretely notated materials, each hand must play its materials independently and beyond any one-to-one relationship between dislocated notes.

Elsewhere in the second subject, the incised right-hand slurs before 17.2 and 18.2 in all iterations seem a bit odd at first, but do make sense given De Lara's shortening of 18.3. Indeed, in anticipation of the *crescendo* in m. 19, she not only begins to rush as early as m. 17 resulting in a shortened third beat at 18.3, but she also begins to imitate the slurs of the rising right-hand figures of the *crescendo* proper here as well. It is also strangely difficult to bring out the right- and left-hand 'thumb' melodies of the second subject to the detriment of the clarity of the upper soprano line, though this difficulty is just a by-product of our obsession with prominent soprano lines. In the statement of this second subject in the recapitulation, De Lara's rhythmic alterations in the upper right-hand line of m. 131 - 132 also seem to stem from this focus on inner thumb lines, as the notes she lengthens in the right-hand line coincide with the rising E flat - E natural line played by the left-hand thumb. De Lara's forceful and brisk playing here however subverts any tonal or temporal contrast between the first, second and transitional subjects, while also undercutting the weight of the work's ending. Her dramatic slowing over the final hairpin of the subject in all iterations only further destabilizes small- and large-scale structure, as it in a sense 'steals' weight from the much more important structural slowing at the end of the exposition and recapitulation.

De Lara's emphasis of upbeats intensifies in the closing material, where one has the sense that they occupy the apexes of imaginary hairpins: beats one through three are rushed as if accompanied by an imaginary *crescendo*; the first note of the triplet upbeat is lengthened and time is briefly suspended where the hairpin's apex would be; and then one swings through the following downbeat before rushing to the next upbeat. In the closing material and in many places in the development section however, this often results in the impression that local details are again being emphasized to the detriment of overall structure, especially given how slowly De Lara plays this material. Modern pianists would never even stretch every downbeat at these tempi, much less every upbeat. While De Lara's stretching of upbeats similarly overemphasizes the local in the primary and secondary subjects, these passages remain unified because of their higher overall tempi and more dramatic large-scale tempo modifications. In the slow closing material and development section on the other hand, this focus on the local often grinds temporal motion to a standstill, causing one to lose sight of both overall structure and pulse.

Adding to this privileging of local details in the closing material and development section is the sense that the weight and motion of the hands favour the 'inner' over the outer. Modern pianists voice this material so that the outer bass and soprano notes ring out clearly, while using their finely honed techniques (and carefully balanced instruments) to unobtrusively and evenly play the repeated triplet figures. De Lara's playing of these repeated inner triplet figures on the other hand seems vastly overdone, both because they often ring out more clearly than the bass and soprano notes, and because they are not played in either a temporally or tonally consistent manner. Her playing of some left-hand sixteenth note octaves with rather than after these inner triplet

figures in the closing material only adds to their overemphasis. In the development section, this favouring of the inner is extended to include her prominent playing of the rising left-hand figures over the hairpins in m. 72, 80 and 83, as well as the murmuring left-hand repeated figure in m. 115 - 117. In both cases, accompanimental left-hand materials are emphasized to the detriment of the more expressive and dynamic right hand.

In the martial transitional subject, it is surprisingly unsettling to cut the slur at the outset of the first phrase group, to link materials into 11.1 between phrase groups, and to shorten the tied note values at 9.2 and 11.2. Using the slur to 'swing' into a quickly attacked and released downbeat at 9.1 before landing squarely on a fully-held second beat is what establishes the rhythmic impulse and organization of the first phrase group of this subject in modern performances; while keeping the first and second phrase groups discrete not only serves a structural purpose but reasserts the pulse of the second phrase group as well, provided of course that its second beat is held for its full value. By cutting the slur into 9.1 and eliding materials into 11.1 therefore, De Lara undermines the rhythmic impulse of each phrase group from its outset; and by shortening 9.2 and 11.2 she subverts the rhythmic organization of the quickly alternating and rushed *staccato* chords that follow. In the recapitulation, De Lara's drastic cutting of the *fermata* before the outset of this subject only further destabilizes its rhythmic arrangement.

To make matters worse, instead of cutting a full beat between 9.2 - 9.4 and 11.2 - 11.4 thereby preserving a regular pulse, De Lara begins the alternating chords somewhere around where the third beat should fall. In other words, instead of cutting out the equivalent of three triplets at 9.2 and 11.2, she only cuts about two; meaning that the material associated with the fourth beat is already sounding before where the ear thinks

the fourth beat should be. In addition to this unsettling lag in hand-ear coordination, this asymmetrically shortened chord leaves you feeling as though you haven't had enough time to prepare yourself for the challenge of attacking the quickly alternating and rushed *staccato* chords that follow. Indeed, if you cut the equivalent of three full triplets at 9.2 and 11.2 rather than two so that chords associated with fourth beats actually sound on third beats, somehow the following alternating chords are easier to play.

While there's no way to know how all of this felt to De Lara, the difficulty I experience when replicating her approach here might be evidence of the interdependency of technical security and rhythmic periodicity in modern pianism: in other words, being able to accurately predict where a beat will fall in fast and difficult passages seems linked to our sense of navigation (where am I going) and orientation (what position does the hand need to be in when I arrive). This might explain why cutting more time here makes this material easier to play: if I can accurately predict where chords associated with 9.4 and 11.4 will fall according to the logical division of the measure, regardless of whether that turns out to be on beat three or four, I am then able to make the required adjustments to the navigation and orientation of my hands. De Lara's undermining of the rhythmic impulse, organization and regularity of this subject thus makes for some tense moments. This unease resurfaces in the closing material at the end of the recapitulation where De Lara shortens the long note values at 140.3 and 146.3, again in conjunction with rushing. Much like the second beats of the transitional subject, these longer note values would normally be used to assert the rhythmic impulse and organization of the material to come, while also serving as signposts at which one can reset and prepare the ear and hand.

Returning to the transitional subject, the variety and frequency of De Lara's arpeggiations only adds to the conundrum of navigation and orientation initiated by her rhythmic alterations and modifications. Indeed, arpeggiation here means lingering in position where you would otherwise release and move to the next chord; ensuring that you arrive at the next chord with your fingers poised to execute a roll in the correct order; starting to roll chords much earlier than where you want their last notes to fall; and thus also initiating rolls while the previous one is still sounding. These arpeggiations thus require a very close, high and curved position of the hand on the keyboard, with the fingers interspersed amongst the black keys, and with the hand lingering and moving horizontally: no small task at De Lara's speeds. Her arpeggiations here also seem weighted towards the inner voices of each hand while also favouring an 'inward' motion. At 10.3 for example, the last and thus most prominent note of the roll is the inner right-hand F#, while the notes of each hand are rolled towards each other, from the outside in. This inner weight and movement intensifies at 13.1 where, with right- and left-hand thumbs overlapped, the latter plays the last note of the roll. In material that would today be played with a quick and vertical attack for maximum speed, accuracy and power, this 'inward' weighting and moving of the hands makes replicating De Lara's arpeggiations treacherous: indeed, it's a wonder she doesn't miss more notes than she does.

Now compare her arpeggiations of the same chords at 12. 2 and 12.4: in the former she sounds the left-hand octave first, then the inner right-hand note, and then the outer right-hand notes; while in the latter she sounds the upper two notes of the right-hand first, followed by the inner right-hand note, then the left-hand octave. This may seem insignificant, but at her speeds the difference is enormous. At 12.2 it is possible to

roll the right-hand notes with a vertical attack and release: you can 'drop' into the inner note from above, and then your hand is already in position to sound the upper and lower notes around it with a dynamic upward motion that propels you to the next chord. At 12.4 on the other hand, by playing the upper two right-hand notes first and then the lower note, the resulting motion is again inwards as well as down, resulting in a stagnant movement of the hand. In the quicker statement of this subject in the recapitulation, it is thus no surprise that De Lara plays all chords on beats two and four of m. 127 and 129 as she does at 12.2. As a final note on imitating De Lara's arpeggiations here, when playing as quickly as she does it can be difficult for listeners to perceive the order in which I roll chords. While it would be safer to roll chords in orders that favour an upward and outward motion of the hand, the resulting performance would be different: perhaps not audibly, but certainly from the subjective perspective of the performer. Only when imitating the precise order in which De Lara rolls these chords, in conjunction with her tempo modifications and rhythmic alterations, is one truly outside their comfort zone from a temporal, tonal, navigational and orientation point of view. Indeed, the insecurity that comes from not being able to do what comes naturally is what this process is all about.

When imitating De Lara's performance of this work I have found it both illuminating and off-putting to reproduce the 'inward' element of her approach. Weighting and moving the hand in this way runs counter to my habits of playing fast and loud material with an upward and outward attack and release, while using a deep and connected tone and attack in even the softest of passages: 'as if you are wearing velvet gloves lined with iron and the keys are magnets,' as my teacher used to say. Indeed, De

Lara’s approach forces you to move the hand where otherwise you would ‘dig’ into the keys; it tilts the weight of the hands towards the thumbs and away from the singing and navigating fifths; it encourages the emphasis of local details and figures that tend to be downplayed in the name of structure and rhythmic regularity in modern performances; and it impedes the accurate and timely playing of technically-challenging passages. You can listen to my copy of Adelina De Lara's performance in Sound Ex. 5.1.1, while following along with the annotated score I used to rehearse (including the findings of both 'naked ear' and software-assisted analyses) in Score Ex. 5.1.1. An annotation key has also been included with the accompanying audio-visual materials.

5.1.2) Op. 117 no. 1, Adelina De Lara

When replicating Adelina De Lara's many dislocations, arpeggiations and rhythmic alterations in the A section of this work, it soon becomes clear that they lend a rather direct, stilted and vertical feeling to one's tone, attack and time feel. While her tendency to both lengthen downbeats and swing sixteenth note melodic upbeats here seems fairly straightforward and rather complimentary, with the lengthened downbeats completing and in a sense correcting the swung upbeats thus preserving regularity of pulse, what complicates matters are the shortened quarters at the ends of local phrases. They make the swung sixteenth note upbeats and lengthened downbeats sound early, meaning that time feel isn’t maintained but rather accumulates from phrase to phrase.

The resulting small-scale temporal irregularity of De Lara’s approach also makes shaping this material with subtle variations of tone and articulation quite difficult,

especially as both the early swung sixteenth notes and shortened quarter notes at the beginnings and ends of local phrases often coincide with dislocation or arpeggiation. As a result, the outer edges of these phrases become emphasized both tonally and temporally where normally they'd be played in an underemphasized way so as not to detract from the hegemony of the downbeat and the unity of the larger phrase group. While all of this can feel quite rhythmically and tonally lopsided at the local level, everything does remain unified because De Lara's larger phrase groups are similarly shaped with slower and more accentuated playing at their outer edges and with faster and underemphasized playing over their middles. Though her increased use of arpeggiation and lessened use of rhythmic alteration over the quicker middles of these phrase groups does encourage a relatively softer, smoother, and more horizontal approach to tone and attack, it is still not as connected and focused as modern pianists would like.

This is yet more evidence that De Lara's approach to the keyboard results in a feeling of verticality (too much attack and release) in lyrical musical material, and a feeling of horizontality (not enough attack and release) in louder and faster material. This may also be further evidence of the relationship between temporal predictability and matters of tone and technique in modern pianism. In the faster more technically challenging material of Op. 79 no. 2, De Lara's 'inward' weighting and motion of the hands robs us of the time and space needed to navigate and orient the body and mind; in Op. 117 no. 1 these arpeggiations, dislocations and rhythmic alterations sever one's physical contact with the keyboard, they interrupt the temporal predictability of where notes will fall, they skew the hierarchical weighting of tone and time needed to produce a smooth, connected, focused and singing legato line, and as such they create an 'outer'

weighting and motion of the hand. Indeed, modern pianists both ‘feel’ and ‘hear’ their way from note to note: our ears judge what loudness, duration and speed is needed relative to what came before and what comes next; while our hands sense the weight of keys, the speed with which they need to be attacked and released, and the distances between them. Though it’s impossible to know whether De Lara physically lifts her hands with each arpeggiation, dislocation and local rhythmic alteration, when imitating her performance I certainly find myself doing so. The resulting disruption to my ingrained habits of listening and feeling alters my relationship to the instrument, and I find myself seeking ways of connecting materials through intricate manoeuvres of fingering and pedalling.

De Lara’s performance of the B section of this work on the other hand is characterized less by local rhythmic alterations and much more so by large-scale rushing. If one can resist the temptation of trying to retain a sense of a regular underlying pulse here, De Lara’s restless early dislocations of the left hand's bass notes and the many of the right hand's second and fifth eighth notes actually help rather than hinder hand-ear coordination: they make one’s tempo accumulate by initiating a rhythmic impulse forward that drags the hand along so that somehow it ends up in the right place at the right time; the spaces between dislocated bass notes become closer while rushing and more distant when slowing, thereby also creating some temporal predictability of when and where material will fall; and the dislocated right-hand notes facilitate the voicing of inner lines thus providing an aural compass.

When playing along with De Lara’s recording however, it soon became clear that my dislocated left- and right-hand notes were not nearly as early as hers: in her

performance, the left-hand entries sound in the spaces occupied by interstitial rests and thus with the third and sixth eighth notes of the right hand. I on the other hand was trying to preserve these rests while maintaining a one-to-one relationship between dislocated notes and associated material. In order to produce something close to De Lara's performance therefore, I had to completely ignore the vertical and discrete placement of notes, bar lines, and the values of notes and rests; thereby encouraging dislocation and tempo modification to pull the hand and ear along, rather than trying to control them. The resulting overlap between discrete materials in this section however, in combination with De Lara's emphasis of inner right-hand voices here, seems to create a shift towards the 'inner' and thus provides structural contrast with the surrounding sections. Indeed, when imitating De Lara's performance of this work, while the A sections can feel stilted as a result of too much vertical attack and release, the B section allows for the much more fluid and intuitive orientation, navigation and coordination of the hand and ear.

In the A^1 section however, De Lara now seems to combine the inner and outer, thereby creating further structural contrast between each of this work's three sections. The outer is achieved simply by virtue of the musical material itself, the slower overall tempo at which it is played, and by De Lara's more restrained use of unifying and driving tempo modifications. Regarding the inner, at the outset of the A^1 section she creates a softer, more horizontal and ethereal atmosphere by rolling most chords from bottom to top. Her variations to this order of rolling notes at 42.4 and 44.6 favour the voicing of inner lines, as do her early dislocated inner right-hand notes at 43.6 and 48.6 and the combination of dislocation and arpeggiation at 54.3. Even her reduced use of rhythmic alterations in m. 46 - 49 cultivates less local temporal irregularity and thus less tonal disjointedness; while

in m. 50 - 51 she focuses so much on inner lines that she goes so far as to cut the upper B flat of m. 50 and the first upper D of m. 51. You can hear my copy of Adelina De Lara's performance of this work in Sound Ex. 5.1.2 while following along with Score Ex. 5.1.2.

5.1.3) Op. 118 no. 3, Ilona Eibenschütz

When tackling the imitation of Ilona Eibenschütz's performance of this work, one immediately gains an appreciation for what must have been her impressively facile technique. It is extraordinarily difficult to play this material as quickly as she manages, even before attempting to rush where and as much as she does. At these speeds one is also forced to adopt a very superficial tone and attack, as well as a thoroughly vertical one: all chords in the A sections of this work have to be attacked briskly, with a shaken movement of the hand (as though shaking off water), with straight arms and fingers, and with guidance and weight provided by one's left-hand thumb and right-hand fifth finger. This upward and outward focus and motion characterizes Eibenschütz's performance of the A sections of this work, and is particularly evidenced by her frequent omission of inner notes on the downbeats of many measures, especially where rushing through structural boundaries like at 11.1, 23.1 and 73.1 for example. Having leaner chords to negotiate cleanly and quickly indeed helps one to play materials as quickly as she does.

In Eibenschütz's hair-raisingly quick performance of the B section of this work however, we see glimmers of De Lara's 'inner' approach. Here, the position and motion of the hand suddenly changes: one's tone and attack is still quite superficial and quick, meaning one has little time to play keys to their bottoms in order to draw a full and

connected tone from the instrument; but now the hands must be extremely close to the keys, enabling one to 'feel' one's way from note to note. Eibenschütz also uses subtle variations of dislocation and arpeggiation here to bring out inner melodies, especially at the beginnings and ends of the section's phrase groups. This is perhaps further evidence of these pianists' use of oscillations between inner and outer approaches when creating large-scale structural contrast, rather than through variations of dynamics and overall tempo. While Eibenschütz's quick and vertical attack in the A section and her closer attack in the B section are second nature to modern pianists, few would dare to omit inner voices in loud and fast passages or to play so tonally fleetingly in lyrical ones, and as a result it is exceedingly difficult to replicate the velocity of her approach to this work. When our reluctance to truncate materials and to not draw a full tone from the keyboard is relinquished however, it is truly remarkable just how fast one can play.

In the primary subject of the A section, Ilona Eibenschütz stretches time slightly over some upbeats at the beginnings of phrase groups, but like De Lara's triplet upbeats in Op. 79 no. 2, she immediately rushes through their subsequent downbeats, which as result become underemphasized. This feature of her performance is very difficult to replicate, and I again catch myself sneakily trying to stretch rather than rush through downbeats. This underemphasizing of downbeats becomes even less intuitive into m. 3 and 8, where it is customary to take a slight amount of time to set up the harmonic progressions to the structural boundaries at m. 6 and 11. While Eibenschütz does slow into their preparatory measures in m. 5 and 10, it is very hard to bring oneself to rush through the remainders of those measures and straight into the new phrases at m. 6 and 11. Like De Lara’s upbeats however, the key seems to be to think of both upbeats and

these structurally preparatory measures like temporal swings into and through the material they precede.

Because all downbeats in the primary subject of this work coincide with longer note values in its melodic material however, Eibenschütz's emphasis of and rushing between upbeats again disjoints the hand and ear. Not only do these downbeats seem to come too early relative to the temporal impulse established by the stretching of their upbeats, but rushing between these upbeats often results in the shortening of third quarters. In modern performances, one would use these long melodic downbeats and third quarters to assert and ground the temporal organization of this material while preparing the ear and hand for the quickly alternating and rushed eighth note chords between them. When imitating Eibenschütz's approach, the longer note values coinciding with downbeats and third beats lose their grounding, ordering and preparatory function, while one also has less time to navigate the spaces between them. This last point is particularly important, as the spaces between third and fourth beats often involve a repositioning and leap of the hand. When shortening third quarters as a result of rushing therefore, not only do you have to accomplish this repositioning and leaping in less time, but you also have to ignore your ears which tell you that, based on the rhythmic organization of the melodic line and emphasized upbeats, that you have much more time to get to the fourth beat than you actually do.

Eibenschütz's underemphasizing of downbeats is particularly difficult at m. 10, where one must ignore the *rit. - ten.* indication, while also resisting the urge to linger over both the end of the primary subject at 10.1 and the beginning of the secondary subject at 11.1. As we have already seen, Eibenschütz blurs the structural boundary at m. 10 in both

A sections with elision. In practice however it becomes clear that this structural subversion is greatly aided by her omission of inner right-hand voices at 11.1, her temporal underemphasizing of the downbeats at 10.1 and 11.1, her shortening of the third beat at 10.3, her placing of the left-hand octave at 10.4 with the upper note of the rolled and early right-hand entry of the new subject, and her immediate rushing into and through the second subject. All of this places more relative emphasis on this early upbeat, thereby undermining the rhythmic impulse and organization of the new subject. Indeed, Eibenschütz's rushing, shortened third beats and underemphasized downbeats result in the lengthening, displacement and thus overemphasis of the upbeat to the transitional subject and primary subject in both m. 22[98] and 72 respectively. The temporal regularity of the material that follows both instances is thus undercut from their very outsets, and as such the pianist enters the new subject matter disoriented both temporally and technically - a feeling that is only enhanced when they begin to rush anew as Eibenschütz does.

It is thus again important to resist the temptation of lingering on downbeats in any way when replicating Eibenschütz's structural blurring at m. 10[86], 22[98] and 72. In practice I've found that to reproduce both her temporal asymmetry and accumulation it helps to continue to shorten third quarters well into the ensuing second subject, reprise of the primary subject, and transitional subject. If you do so while imitating Eibenschütz's subsequent rushing, by the return of the primary subject in m. 23 and 77 your speeds are every bit as precipitous as hers, resulting in that effect noticed when analysing her performance whereby each statement of the primary subject returns faster than the last.

Within the second subject for example, the early, lengthened and overemphasized right-hand upbeat at 14.4[90.4], followed by some precipitous rushing over the accented

syncopations of the following two measures, indeed intensifies the temporal instability established by the blurring of the subject's outset. This is because it catalyses a chain reaction whereby the weight of the downbeat at 15.1 is undercut; the hairpins of m. 17 - 18 are skimmed over; the upbeat to m. 17 enters early; the start of the *crescendo* in m. 18 is blurred; and the primary subject returns underprepared in m. 23 as a result of rushing, elision and now also truncation. If you allow this chain reaction to undercut details that would normally be used to both ground and assert the rhythmic organization of the subject while also functioning as signposts at which to prepare the ear and hand, the unravelling and breathless feeling of Eibenschütz's playing is fairly easily reproduced.

It is also important to avoid the temptation of recreating Eibenschütz's elisions and truncations in m. 22 - 23[98 - 99] while trying to play the remaining notes according to some logical rhythmic division of the measure. Indeed, when truly imitating her approach here, nothing is given its full weight or value, and the hands seem to be playing the primary subject before the ear tells you it has arrived. This is because in lightning-quick succession she links the top E at 22.3 with the rolled inner right-hand chord of the same beat, which is then linked to the left-hand chord at 22.4 and the top right-hand F#, which is finally linked to the downbeat of 23.1. Beats three and four of this structurally preparatory measure thus become a kind of ornament, beyond logical rhythmic and harmonic delineations, to the downbeat of the primary subject at 23.1. When executed correctly, there is no way to predict when and where this downbeat will sound because of the harmonic and rhythmic ambiguity of the measure that precedes it. Once the hands have played this downbeat however, the ear still struggles to identify its structural importance because it is again underemphasized through the omission of inner notes, the

avoidance of lingering, the shortening of its following third beat, and the further accumulation of tempo.

Despite Ilona Eibenschütz's subtle shift towards a more 'inner' tonal focus and weight of the hand in the B section of this work, it is still unsettling not to have the time to shape and mould its many beautiful harmonic and melodic details; especially where these details become more densely packed over the middles of the section's four phrase groups. It is odd for example not to slow to close the first halves of the first and third phrase groups at m. 44 and 60, or at the end of the hairpin in m. 52 and into the beginning of the next hairpin in m. 53. While her doubled F#s at the slower ends of the first and third groups do make a lot of sense, with the first F# played by the left hand to close one phrase group and the second played with the right hand to open the next, it is unclear why she doubles the F# in the left hand at 69, other than for added emphasis. What is clear however is that her dislocations and arpeggiations in m. 69 - 70 are primarily motivated by the voicing of inner lines. My copy of Eibenschütz's performance of this work can be heard in Sound Ex. 5.1.3, while the annotated score is found in Score Ex. 5.1.3.

5.1.4) Op. 119 no. 2, Ilona Eibenschütz

Again one encounters the difficulty of unlearning the tendency to slow into and out of phrases when replicating Ilona Eibenschütz's performance of this work. One finds instead that almost all phrases are rushed through in their entirety, and when time is taken it tends to occur either after they have already begun or at their middles in the presence of hairpins. When this blurring of the outer edges of local phrases becomes extended to

larger structures, as in the truncations and elisions of m. 6 - 9, 11 - 13, 22 - 27 and their reiterations for example, just like in Eibenschütz's performance of Op. 118 no. 3 materials come before their time and nothing is held its full length. It is thus imperative to retrain one's fingers and ears in order to resist the temptation of fitting what remains into a mathematical division of the bar or to temporally ground elements where possible. This is particularly pertinent at the outsets of the main subject in m. 9 and the triplet subject in m. 13: just like at the boundary between the second subject and reprise of the primary subject in m. 22[98] of Op. 118 no. 3, in both cases the material just before is truncated and elided beyond rhythmic and harmonic delineations and thus becomes a kind of ornament to the outset of the new subject. In each instance the right-hand subject entries are early, lengthened, and displaced to an imaginary downbeat; while a slight amount of time is taken after they have already begun before tempo again starts to accumulate.

At m. 13[92] this structural subversion is especially counterintuitive, as most pianists slow here to emphasize the shift to both F major and a triple time feel. Interestingly, Eibenschütz's rhythmic alteration of the left hand of this subject so that its second note coincides with the third of the right results in a very vertical motion, with each hand being lifted at the end of each triplet figure and dropped at the beginning of the next. This helps immensely when trying to replicate Eibenschütz's extremely fast tempo over this material, while also creating contrast with the material that surrounds it. Indeed, the A sections of this work and the second half of its middle section are generally played much like the B section of Op. 118 no. 3: with a very close, quick, and superficial tone and attack. Given the breathlessness of Eibenschütz's playing of this triplet subject however, she then takes a disproportionately large amount of time to emphasize its final

hairpin in m. 16 - 17, thereby 'stealing' weight from the more important structural slowing at the end of the section. In the A^1 section on the other hand, while this hairpin in is still stretched it is nonetheless underemphasized relative to its surrounding materials as Eibenschütz elides materials right before and after it.

In both iterations of the alternating subject, her displacement of the right hand to strong beats in m. 19 - 20 seems motivated by a desire to bring out the inner right-hand melody, as well as to shape the hairpin indication. Her dislocations in m. 30 - 31 on the other hand are very difficult to reproduce, and do not seem to represent an attempt to focus on inner lines. Indeed, in a much more extreme version of De Lara's dislocations in the B section of Op. 117 no. 1 and the second subject of Op. 79 no. 2, here there is no discernible one-to-one relationship between dislocated notes and their associated materials, with the left-hand figures of one measure still sounding while the right hand has moved onto the next. The resulting disjointedness at this point in Eibenschütz's performance seems to be merely a by-product of extreme rushing and the impressive independence of her hands, rather than evidence of a desire to highlight textural details.

After struggling to reproduce Eibenschütz's rhythmic alterations in the first and second phrase groups of the B section, it became clear that in order to differentiate early quarters that result from rhythmic alteration from those that result from local rushing, I needed to focus on the proportional relationship of each of the three beats in a given measure. In measures with rhythmic alteration, the third quarter sounds suddenly early compared to what came before, while in the rushed measures one senses a smooth transition from beat to beat as the spaces between those beats become gradually more constricted. In the second phrase group things become slightly more convoluted however,

as now there are many more anticipatory and delayed melodic eighth notes to contend with. Interestingly, the effect of Eibenschütz's rhythmic alterations in these opening two phrase groups is highly reminiscent of De Lara's 'outer' approach to the A section material of Op. 117 no. 1, particularly as related to the relationship between temporal asymmetry and tonal unevenness. Indeed, these rhythmic alterations make the spaces between notes uneven, which then makes connecting those notes with a smooth and focused tone nearly impossible, resulting in more lift and release.

Between these two phrase groups we again encounter an instance where Eibenschütz rushes into and through internal structural boundaries, while taking time after they have begun. After rushing over the end of the first phrase group in m. 42 - 43, she immediately plays the dislocated inner right-hand and bass notes of the second phrase group at 44.1, after which she slightly stretches time by delaying both the rest of the right-hand material at 44.1 and the following eighth note. After then rushing right into the third and fourth phrase groups of this middle section, one again struggles to cope with the sheer speed of Eibenschütz's approach, as well as with the return to a more fleeting tone and attack and the resulting lack of time or space to ground, shape, and 'dig' into details. The most distressing examples of this occur at the thoroughly deemphasized *dolce* marking at m. 60, with a whisper of time being taken at the apex of the hairpin just prior to that measure; and at the drastically shortened downbeat of m. 63[79], which subverts both the pulse and the weight of the final statement of the section's primary thematic material.

Eibenschütz's dislocations at the end of each iteration of the fourth phrase group in m. 66 - 67 and 82 - 83 do however seem motivated by a desire to ground and shape

musical materials. In the first iteration, her dislocations in the right-hand melodic line are both delayed, thereby closing the phrase group before she elides the end of m. 67 with the beginning of 68. Upon repetition however, now her right-hand dislocations are both early, thereby anticipating the transitional material that leads to the reprise of the A section. Because she slows dramatically over this transitional material, perhaps she didn't feel the need to do so at the end of the second iteration of the fourth phrase group as well. You can hear my copy of Eibenschütz's performance of this work in Sound Ex. 5.1.4 while following along with the annotated score in Score Ex. 5.1.4.

5.1.5) Brahms as Played by Adelina de Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz

In the summary of the precepts of contemporary Brahms style in the previous chapter we saw that literal Brahms performances are those where notes and rests are given their full value; where materials notated vertically are played simultaneously; where nothing is added, removed or altered; where all instances of notation prompt some appropriate and relative action; and where allowable departures from scores are those that highlight the detail and structure of scores. Detailed Brahms performances are those where every part of a work is understood to form an essential part of its meaning; where clarity and complexity are preserved; and where parallel notation is rendered similarly or in structurally staggered ways. Structural Brahms playing is where local details are shaped according to their structural weight; where consistency within and contrast between structures is maintained; and where the outer edges of small- and large-scale structures are clearly delineated. Temporally-measured Brahms performances are those

that afford enough time to shape local details without obscuring structure; that avoid rushing at all costs; that maintain an underlying sense of pulse and the divisions of the measure; that shape parallel indications with time in similar or structurally staggered ways; and that maintain temporal consistency within and contrast between sections. We have also seen how control is understood as both impetus and outcome of pianists' adherence to these norms.

What then might a summary of the tenets of Brahmsian pianism according to Adelina De Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz look like? While it is clear that neither pianist played Brahms's piano works in the same ways all of the time, like modern Brahmsian pianists their recorded performances lay bare a set of propensities that intimate their understanding of this repertoire, its creator, and their roles as performers. Rather than establish a set of rules for a recordings-inspired style of Brahms performance therefore, the following summary instead seeks to clarify what it might take to play in such a way today by highlighting tensions between De Lara and Eibenschütz's approaches and the strictures of contemporary Brahms style.[455] Based on the outcomes of both analysing and copying these pianists' recorded performances, this knowledge is thus informed as much by listening as it is by doing: how does it *feel* when our most ingrained habits and assumptions regarding Brahmsian pianism collide with theirs? Indeed, the hope is that the

[455] Sigurd Slåttebrekk and Tony Harrison have adopted a similar approach in their *Chasing the Butterfly* project. In their discussion of what they call the 'inverse characteristics' of Grieg's playing style, they zero in on those elements that are fundamental to modern pianists' performances, but that are either nonexistent or used sparingly for effect in Grieg's. Indeed, Slåttebrekk and Harrison assert that, "when studying Grieg's 'footprint,' we are not only looking at the actual area and pattern which is covered, but also its 'negative' – where does he not step and where are the borderlines?" This tension between what is actually done (or not) and what one has been conditioned to expect is key to understanding a past performance style, and can often only be achieved through the confrontation of imitation. Slåttebrekk and Harrison, "Approaching a Performance Style," in *Chasing the Butterfly*, http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=137.

summary below elucidates a space of resistance between the Brahms of today and Brahms as he was recorded: a space that, once revealed, can then be narrowed by those inclined to do so.

5.1.5.a) Adelina De Lara

- **Literal:** Playing like De Lara involves the use of arpeggiation and dislocation almost everywhere, and not just at particularly poignant local details or structurally-important junctures. Dislocation however does feature more prominently at the slower outer edges of musical structures, with arpeggiation occurring more frequently over their faster middles. Wide and powerful dislocation also tends to be used in dramatic passages in lower registers, with arpeggiation being used to soften changes of colour or to highlight passages in higher registers. Chords are spread and the hands are disjointed either slowly to ground temporal motion, or quickly to propel it; with materials being rolled or dislocated in orders dependent on the voicing of inner melodic lines. In most cases dislocation and arpeggiation are initiated early, leading to localized asynchronicity between the hands and the linking or overlapping of discrete materials. Elsewhere, notes can be doubled, added or removed for effect, emphasis or voicing; while tied notes can be sounded again for extra resonance.

- **Detailed:** De Lara's approach to notated details involves cutting slurs and ignoring *fermati*, especially where rushing or consciously blurring structural boundaries. Inner melodic materials are often brought out much more so than upper soprano lines; *crescendi* are anticipated by starting to rush early; and indications to reduce temporal and/or tonal intensity in lyrical materials can be ignored, resulting in what would today be interpreted as reduced temporal and tonal contrast between subjects and sections. When arpeggiating and dislocating,

materials otherwise notated discretely can become linked or overlapped, leading to the alteration of rest and note values; while local details and figures can be tonally and temporally shaped where they would today be underemphasized in the interests of rhythmic and structural regularity and clarity.

- **Structural:** While playing like De Lara generally involves the unification and delineation of all structures by playing more slowly at their outer edges and faster over their middles, the boundaries between these structures can often be softened through elision, the cutting of *fermati*, and the ignoring of indications to modify tonal and/or temporal intensity, especially where lyrical subjects or sections are concerned. While consistency of time and tone does not necessarily have to be maintained within larger sections, contrast indeed tends to be created between them. This structural contrast is sometimes achieved by oscillating between an 'outer' or more vertical approach to time and tone in slower passages, and an 'inner' or more horizontal approach in faster passages. Local details and figures that would today be downplayed in the interests of structure and rhythmic regularity are often emphasized; while reoccurring materials can be shaped differently and in ways that either elucidate or subvert overall structure.

- **Temporally-Measured:** De Lara's approach includes the shaping of all structures small and large with both rushing and slowing; the accumulation of tempo from phrase group to phrase group, uncorrected by slowing at their ends; and the expressive lengthening, shortening, early and late sounding of notes, thereby undercutting the rhythmic regularity and clarity of the divisions of the measure so prized in modern Brahms performances. These rhythmic alterations often coincide with the blurring of structural boundaries in rushed up-tempo subjects, thereby subverting their rhythmic impulse and organization from the very outset. Elsewhere, rhythmic regularity can also be relaxed by allowing combinations of arpeggiation, dislocation and rushing to link discreet materials; by emphasizing local details and figures; by ignoring indications to slow, particularly in lyrical sections; by shortening longer note values, *fermati* and rests when rushing; and by

using rhythmic alterations to simplify difficult materials and the voicing of inner melodic lines.

- **Expressively- and Technically-Controlled:** By simple virtue of the many tensions between Adelina De Lara's style and the principles of modern Brahms pianism, her approach to detail, structure, tone and time simply does not tend to read as expressively or technically controlled today. This impression is further compounded by her technical missteps, and by how her approach can feel too vertical in lyrical passages and too horizontal in faster ones. Indeed, you know that you are playing in ways similar to De Lara when you feel as though you are using too much attack and release in slower tempi, thereby severing the physical and aural connection with the keyboard needed to produce deeply connected, focused and singing melodic lines; while in faster passages it feels as though your tone and attack is too horizontal, connected and slow, thereby robbing you of the lift and release needed to execute materials quickly and accurately. Playing like De Lara is also governed by a weighting of the hands and ears inwards, as evidenced by her focus on inner lines, her use of inwardly-voiced and -rolled arpeggiations, and by how her approach forces one to linger where they would move in faster passages, while moving where they would linger in slower ones.

Given how 'unBrahmsian' many elements of Adelina De Lara's approach can sound and feel to modern pianists, it is remarkable that her pianism is still regarded as generally reflective of the described precepts of Clara Schumann's hyper-controlled performance ideology. Indeed, as discussed in previous chapters, not only is she reported to have staunchly "maintained and professed the Clara Schumann method"[456] throughout her career, but much of what we know about Clara's style in the first place comes from

[456] "Madame Adelina de Lara," *The Guardian* (November 27, 1961): 2.

De Lara's own recollections. Let us recall for instance Michael Musgrave's summary of De Lara's distillation of the essential elements of Clara's approach:

> She stresses first and above all Clara's requirement 'to be truthful to the composer's meaning, to emphasize every beauty in the composition,' which implies the thorough study of and knowledge of the score. She required constant attention to tone, rhythm, and phrasing - each phrase as though it were given to a musical instrument. She required tempos proper to the music. She was extremely averse to speed and thought it the curse of modern performance: 'keine Passagen' (no passagework) was her expression, referring to the routine rushing through figurations for brilliance of effect.[457]

Aside from De Lara's use of both slowing and hastening to shape musical materials however, there isn't anything particularly contradictory between her recorded approach and her verbal account of the precepts of Clara's teaching. In fact, while she does rush in the more technically challenging passages of Op. 79 no. 2, her use of arpeggiation makes it difficult to play successions of leaping chords quickly and accurately, thereby preventing the kind of extreme rushing one hears in Ilona Eibenschütz's recordings for example. Furthermore, her rhythmic alterations, arpeggiations and dislocations sever the contact needed to produce a coaxed and singing legato tone in lyrical materials, reflecting contemporaneous reports that in her playing "the notes clin[k] together freely, instead of being, as in most modern performances, clogged together with the syrup of studied expression."[458] As such, the resulting

[457] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 316, from De Lara, *Finale* (London, 1955), 55.
[458] "Two Schumann Recitals," *The Manchester Guardian* (September 17, 1952): 5.

straightforwardness of her approach does seem to echo accounts of how Clara's self-abnegating pianism "brought one as near to the composer as lay in her power."[459]

Even more tantalizing are connections between the 'inward' nature of De Lara's approach and Clara's use of the terms 'Innerlich ruhig' (keep quiet inside), 'Das Getragene' (providing support by giving full value to inner voices and the bass), and especially 'hineinlegen' (to put inside): the latter of which is described by Fanny Davies as a quality achieved through technique and by "something spiritual and emotional," "as is conveyed by the pressure of a hand one loves," and not through "extreme digging into the keys." As we have seen, De Lara's playing in slower materials indeed encourages a less 'dug in' approach to tone and attack, while in quicker materials it encourages a close, covered and connected one. While De Lara's recorded performances are full of examples where inner materials are emphasized with tone and time, her use of inwardly- and downwardly-rolled arpeggiations in the martial transitional subject of Op. 79 no. 2 also recalls Clara's insistence that chords be played "in a way that will convey to the hearer the significance of the harmonies therein contained."[460]

Because many elements of De Lara's recorded style do seem to support descriptions of Clara's performance ideology as detailed in previous chapters and as briefly reiterated here, her historical Brahmsian authority remains intact. Indeed, as Musgrave asserts, De Lara's Brahms recordings have a degree of historical authority "despite her obvious limitations of technique and occasionally memory of reading."[461] When playing in ways consciously informed by De Lara's approach however, our performances should be at least as distant to the precepts of contemporary Brahms style

[459] "Clara Schumann," *The Academy* 49, no. 1252 (May 30, 1896): 454.
[460] Davies and Corder, "Robert Schumann," 494, 493.
[461] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 314 - 15.

as hers, which might mean including many of those elements traditionally dismissed as mere consequences of a deteriorated body and mind. In other words, they should exhibit what we would interpret today as a rather casual approach to notation, musical details, time and structure; and they must feel too straightforward in lyrical passages and not direct and powerful enough in faster ones. De Lara's approach to the performance of Brahms's music may have been understood as controlled within her own musical contexts, but performances based on that approach that read as controlled today are unlikely to sound anything like hers.

5.1.5.b) Ilona Eibenschütz

- **Literal**: Playing like Eibenschütz involves using arpeggiation and dislocation sparingly when highlighting local details like the apexes of hairpins, inner lines, and the beginnings and ends of lyrical passages; and much more so when eliding and/or truncating musical materials, especially while rushing through and blurring the boundaries of structures large and small. When combined with rushing, these dislocations and arpeggiations often result in the complete disjointing of the hands, with materials overlapping and becoming linked where otherwise notated discretely. Elsewhere, notes can be doubled, added and altered at will for effect, voicing or emphasis; tied notes can be played again; and large parcels of musical material can be rewritten or omitted altogether as the performer sees fit.

- **Detailed:** Eibenschütz's approach to notated detail includes ignoring *fermati* when rushing or where blurring structural boundaries; ignoring indications to reduce temporal and/or tonal intensity both in lyrical materials and in many other places as well; and altering the values of notes and rests almost everywhere. Most importantly, when playing in an Eibenschütz way one generally has little time to

shape local details or even to preserve local complexities of rhythm, harmony, melody and texture due to the briskness of her tempi and her tendency to rush precipitously. In performances consciously inspired by this approach therefore, shaping musical works through extreme rushing should read as significantly more important than elucidating the details of those works. Where local details are emphasized with the taking of time however, these instances tend to assume near structural significance against this general backdrop of rush and hurry.

- **Structural:** When playing like Eibenschütz, nearly all structures large and small are delineated with an approach to tempo modification that is defined by rushing. The outer edges of these structures are often softened through combinations of arpeggiation, rhythmic alteration, truncation and elision; but when these demarcations are emphasized through the taking of time, this stretching tends to occur before or after rather than at the boundary proper. This structural subversion is often further compounded by a tendency to render the preparatory and subsequent measures of structural boundaries in rhythmically- and harmonically-ambiguous ways. Elsewhere, reiterated materials tend to be played in highly similar ways; indications to reduce temporal and/or tonal intensity in contrasting lyrical subjects and sections are often passed over; and while there is rarely much temporal or tonal contrast between sections, in general there tends to be too much consistency within up-tempo sections by modern standards, and not enough consistency within more lyrical ones. Playing in an Eibenschütz way also includes the contrasting of materials by oscillating between a quick, vertical and thus more 'outer' approach to tone and attack, and one that is fleeting, closer to the keys and thus more 'inner.'

- **Temporally-Measured:** Like De Lara, Eibenschütz's approach includes the accumulation of tempo from phrase group to phrase group; the expressive lengthening, shortening, early and late sounding of notes, thereby undercutting rhythmic regularity and obscuring the divisions of the measure; the subverting of subjects' rhythmic impulse and organization from their very outsets by blurring

their structural boundaries; and the ignoring of *fermati*, indications to slow, note values, and rests. Unlike De Lara however, Eibenschütz's approach is primarily defined by rushing; her tempo almost never settles anywhere and rarely affords the time and space to shape local details; her wholesale truncation and elision of musical materials happens beyond logical divisions of the measure, thereby thoroughly subverting any sense of underlying pulse; and she not only ignores indications to slow in lyrical passages but often uses those passages in order to further increase tempo over entire sections and even works.

- **Expressively- and Technically-Controlled:** If De Lara's approach to manipulating detail, structure and time is an ocean away from the strictures of contemporary Brahms style, then Eibenschütz's is from another planet. Indeed, it's no wonder that Eibenschütz's performances sound and feel so foreign to modern ears and hands: details of rhythm, harmony, melody and texture seem to flit by unaccounted for; structures small and large seem to come and go unprepared and unresolved; and tempo is always wayward, volatile and perpetually leaning forward, pulling all material along with it in some cases while blurring and excluding materials in others. Playing like Eibenschütz must therefore always include extreme rushing; the conscious blurring of both the outer edges of musical structures as well as the details contained therein; the adoption of a quick and superficial tone and attack throughout, while playing more vertically in fast passages and closer to the keys in lyrical ones; and the large-scale omission, alteration or linking of materials. This dismemberment of the skeleton and internal organs of Brahms's scores necessarily leaves one feeling thoroughly out of control.

Unlike De Lara, Ilona Eibenschütz's performances feel just as uncontrolled to modern hands and ears as they did in her own musical contexts, adding credence to

Clara's protest that she "goes too quickly over everything."[462] Her extremely facile technique and tendency to rush through phrases while blurring their outer edges probably also explains the exasperation of Clara's letter in which she pleads with Eibenschütz to "BE PRECISE AND METICULOUS with everything even to the smallest detail...especially in the PHRASING...Do not take it lightly because it does not present technical difficulties for you!"[463] Indeed, the breathless quality of Eibenschütz's performance style recalls contemporaneous observations of a certain "nervousness that spoiled both tone and technique," while her negation of both detail and structure probably underlies assertions that her playing "lacks distinctiveness" and "a little dignity."[464]

Accusations of carelessness aside however, the consistency and facility of Eibenschütz's approach suggests that she wasn't *unable* to play Brahmsian detail and structure according to the precepts of Clara Schumann's teaching, but rather that she was aiming for some other content altogether.[465] Even with practice, attempts to imitate her performance style are ruled by corporeal and psychological impossibilities that cannot be

---

[462] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe,* II: 540 - 42, in Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 316.
[463] Evans, *Behind the Notes*, 25.
[464] "Mdlle. Ilona Eibenschütz," *The Academy* 39, no. 977 (January 17, 1891): 72; "Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 34, no. 601 (March 1, 1893): 151; and "Our London Correspondence," *The Manchester Guardian* (March 30, 1904): 4.
[465] Slåttebrekk and Harrison have also described Grieg's performance style as having been consistently characterized by rushing, the elision of structural boundaries, and the blurring of rhythmic, harmonic and melodic detail. Grieg's playing style therefore, just like Eibenschütz's, has trenchant implications for those elements of scores considered to be most important today: namely, their detail and structure. As Slåttebrekk and Harrison assert, "Grieg in his own performances contradicts almost everything his own written page seems to reinforce." These observations lend credence to the argument that late-Romantic pianists in a sense 'played against the score': in other words, their performance styles are irreducible to notation, regardless of that notation's perceived complexity and coherence. In their discussion of Grieg's very Eibenschütz-like tendency to place emphasis before or after rather than *at* structural boundaries, thereby creating musical shapes that are unpredictable based upon notation alone, Slåttebrekk and Harrison muse: "And where may we ask is that perfectly balanced symmetry so often associated with this composer? It is, practically speaking, non-existent." Slåttebrekk and Harrison, "Grieg Performs Grieg," *Chasing the Butterfly,* http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=87.

easily solved, and perhaps they are not meant to be. As such, when playing in ways consciously inspired by "the little note eater,"[466] you know you have gotten it right when it is this content that emerges in performance, and not necessarily the detail and structure of Brahms's piano music. While Eibenschütz's attendance to neither the local nor structural has been traditionally levied against assertions of her historical Brahmsian authority, let us recall Brahms's claim that, "she is the pianist I best like to hear playing my works."[467]

[466] Ducat, "Conversations with Ilona Derenburg," in Rountree, "Ilona Eibenschütz," 14.
[467] Evans, *Behind the Notes,* 26.

5.2) Experimenting with the Recordings of the Schumann-Brahms Pupils

When selecting works from Brahms's late opuses that were left unrecorded by the Schumann-Brahms pupils, while it is tempting to experiment with those similar to Op. 79 no. 2, Op. 117 no. 1, Op. 118 no. 3 and Op. 119 no. 2, it seems important to resist the positivist one-to-one mapping that might come of such a methodology; with elements being incorporated only when they could be said to fit some pattern or rule. Indeed, if we only applied Ilona Eibenschütz's use of truncation and elision in music that shares rhythmic, harmonic, textural and melodic features with Op. 119 no. 2, these experiments would be over before they began. Her use of these devices doesn't seem to have been restricted by such parameters, and as such it seems odd to limit oneself accordingly. Instead, what follows here are three case studies centred around Brahms's *Intermezzo in E Major* Op. 116 no. 4, *Intermezzo in E Minor* Op. 116 no. 5 and *Intermezzo in B Minor* Op. 119 no. 1. Although two of these works are from the as yet unrepresented *Fantasien* Op. 116, in general they were selected precisely because they differ in material and spirit to those recorded by Adelina De Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz.

It seems equally vital to avoid undertaking these experiments with the intention of trying to play each work in either a 'De Lara' or 'Eibenschütz' way. Given the overlapping nature of each pianist's approach, they seem to represent opposite poles of a common spectrum. Indeed, if Brahms appreciated Clara's approach, as so seemingly well represented by De Lara, and Eibenschütz's as evidenced by his enthusiasm for her playing, then it seems reasonable to suggest that what we have here is a continuum of

approaches to his music with which he was familiar. Rather than impose yet another restriction upon these experiments in early-recorded style, it is this continuum that will instead be freely drawn upon. When it comes to establishing the boundaries of this work therefore, I like Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's assertion that experimental systems must be "differentially organized and sufficiently open to play out their own capacities, unanticipated by the researcher."[468] In other words, for these experiments to truly problematize the aesthetic ideology of control, thereby revealing new insights into Brahms's musical contexts, their parameters cannot be pre-structured in such artificial ways.

Furthermore, following Philip's observation that learning to slide like a nineteenth-century violinist is probably less about pinpointing when and where to slide and more about bringing oneself to slide almost everywhere, it seems unlikely that Adelina De Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz followed concrete rules when using any of the expressive and technical devices discussed thus far. They did however demonstrate a set of tendencies, both individual and shared, that seems to have been applied in a rather improvisatory way to Brahms's piano music. Mary Hunter makes the analogy to 'riffs' in her discussion of Carl Czerny's meticulous writing-out of expressive devices in the musical examples that accompany his performance treatises. According to Hunter the idea was that these effects could be practiced in isolation, abstracted from concrete musical works, and that once perfected they "could be applied as the spirit moved the performer, and not necessarily at predetermined places in any given piece." She asserts that these examples, "despite their sometimes obsessive attention to detail implicitly, if

[468] Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, *Toward a History of Epistemic Things: Synthesizing Proteins in the Test Tube* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), under the glossary entry for "Experimental Systems," in *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology*, 377.

counter-intuitively, teach a kind of improvisational mentality."[469] While the preceding chapter of this volume also includes detailed written-out examples of the minutiae of De Lara and Eibenschütz's recorded performances, they too are intended as practice aids: examples of 'riffs' to be abstractly learned for the purposes of extrapolating them across many other works. While it can be difficult for modern performer-scholars to accept that these pianists' use of such effects may have been motivated by general propensities and spur-of-the-moment decisions rather than by rules or the notational features of specific works, this does seem to be one of the keys to playing as they did.

In the following case studies we will again briefly discuss how contemporary Brahms performance norms play out in each of the three selected works, thereby establishing a baseline against which to juxtapose a snapshot of a possible recordings-inspired approach. Snapshot seems like an apt term here because the recordings-inspired styles proposed here are a mishmash of newly-learned riffs, tendencies and tastes: the specific recipe for which changes performance to performance. Some elements of these recipes however are less ephemeral than others, and those are what will be discussed here.

[469] Mary Hunter, "'To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer': The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 391, accessed January 28, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jams.2005.58.2.357.

5.2.1) *Intermezzo in E Major* Op. 116 no. 4

a) Contemporary Brahms Style

Modern pianists tend to shape the first twenty-five measures of this introspective little work into five clear phrase groups bookended by expressive hairpins. As the apexes of most of these hairpins occur at downbeats, the bass notes of which are played by the right hand crossed over the left, pianists will often stretch time into these downbeats thereby clearly delineating the pulse as well as each phrase group's outer edges. In between these signposts, pianists maintain a consistent approach to tempo while producing a singing, connected and *dolce* tone and attack that is as ever focused on the upper soprano line. Dynamics are manipulated subtly and within a fairly narrow palette throughout as indicated, and as a result this material doesn't dream and soar but rather ruminates. Pianists will however slightly widen this temporal and tonal spectrum during the dynamic, rhythmic, articulation and textural complexities of the final phrase group in m. 20 - 25; using inflections of tone and attack to outline its interwoven melodic lines, while maintaining their expressive composure and a clear sense of the underlying pulse. After an elaborated transitional subject comes to a clear close with the *dim. molto smorzando* in m. 31, we hear the first iteration of the darkly solemn chordal material that bookends the work's middle section.

Pianists continue to shape the more ethereal material of the middle section into four-measure phrase groups by taking slight amounts of time into the downbeats at their outer edges. Despite the *dolce una corda* indication in m. 36, the higher register of the

right-hand material and the lyre-like nature of the left however, pianists maintain a clear-eyed approach to rhythm here except perhaps over the hairpins and notated arpeggiations in m. 44 - 47; contrasting this middle section from its surrounding material primarily by adopting a more diffuse approach to tone production. After the final and often quite forcefully played iteration of the chordal material in m. 49 - 52, the primary subject returns with pianists again highlighting and shaping its textural details with subtle inflections of tone and touch, before taking quite a bit of time into the last and loudest statement of the hairpin figure in m. 57. The piece closes after a brief return of the middle section material, which is played much as before. You can hear Evgeny Kissin's 1990 performance of this work from the Deutsche Grammophon CD (DG POCG 1488) entitled "Schubert *Wanderer Fantasy*; Brahms *Fantasien* Op. 116; Liszt *Ungarische Rhapsodie no. 12*," in Sound Ex. 5.2.1a while following along with Score Ex. 5.2.1a.

b) Recordings-Inspired Brahms Style

While experimenting with this work, I was primarily inspired by how Adelina De Lara emphasizes triplet upbeats and rushes between them in her recording of Op. 79 no. 2. After arpeggiating the left-hand entry at this work's outset for the sake of voicing and emphasis, I thus stretch and in a sense 'hang' on the triplet upbeat to m. 1, before 'swinging' the temporal motion into that measure and all the way through to the right-hand upbeat at 1.3. The bass note at the apex of the hairpin is played early, but otherwise this downbeat is much less emphasized than it would be in modern performances. By allowing the temporal momentum established at this first triplet upbeat to carry through

the remainder of the first phrase group and into the next emphasized triplet upbeat at 4.3, tempo accumulates, second beats become increasingly shortened, third beats seem to enter earlier, the interstitial rests between left- and right-hand materials become undervalued, and a clear sense of the underlying pulse and divisions of the measure becomes more obscure. Just as we have seen in both De Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz's performances, the next stretched triplet at 4.3 doesn't re-establish tempo but rather provides even more momentum, meaning that the second phrase group unfolds at a higher tempo than the first.

After briefly stretching time at the apex of the hairpin in m. 8, like Eibenschütz's shaping of local phrases in the opening measures of Op. 119 no. 2, the boundary between the end of the second phrase group and the outset of the transitional subject in m. 10 is blurred as I rush to a stretched and arpeggiated hairpin at 10.3. In so doing, the long note value associated with the downbeat and 'true' outset of the new subject at 10.1 is shortened. I then begin to rush as the melodic material of this transitional subject descends into yet another emphasized triplet upbeat at 14.3; using more dislocation where playing slowly in m. 12, and more arpeggiation and elision where tempo accumulates in m. 13. These elisions, in combination with another shortened note value at 14.1, then become linked to the arpeggiated entry of the triplet upbeat at 14.3, and another structural boundary is blurred as a result.

The next phrase group continues much as at the opening, only this time with the rhythmic organization of the hands becoming even more ambiguous as the rising left-hand figures in m. 16 - 18 are dislocated and begin to overlap with the otherwise discretely-notated descending right-hand figures. The triplet upbeat at 18.3 is again used

to catapult temporal motion into and through the next phrase group, where the textural complexities of m. 22 - 25 are elucidated through dislocation, extreme independence of the hands, and the favouring of inner lines, as inspired by De Lara's playing of the second subject of Op. 79 no. 2 and the middle section of Op. 117 no. 1. Here, bass notes are sounded early, with their rising figures following immediately afterwards; left- and right-hand materials otherwise notated discretely begin to overlap; the upper and inner lines of the right hand become disjointed and enter into dialogue with one another, with the inner lines being played quite forcefully; and rushing continues until the resolution of that inner line at 25.3 and the apex of an arpeggiated hairpin at 26.3.

While again using combinations of dislocation, arpeggiation and elision as I rush over the *crescendo* of the elaborated transitional subject, just like both De Lara and Eibenschütz might do I pay careful attention to inner and bass lines; I ignore the ***dim. molto smorzando*** indication in m. 31; and while I slightly draw out the triplet upbeat at 32.3, I maintain tonal and temporal intensity until the end of the chordal material, thereby linking these discrete subjects. Furthermore, because this chordal material is entered obliquely rather than patently, it assumes a snarling character as opposed to the broodiness more frequently heard in modern performances.

Inspired both by De Lara's use of arpeggiation in the high register material of the A^1 section of Op. 117 no. 1, and by both her and Eibenschütz's impassioned playing of lyrical materials, I then rush over both four-measure phrase groups of the middle section while adopting a much more extroverted tone than that suggested by the *dolce una corda* indication. Throughout this material, all right-hand chords are arpeggiated, while those occurring at upbeats and after second beats are sounded early; bass notes are dislocated

with the remainder of their rising lyre-like figures following immediately and independently afterwards; downbeats are underemphasized; and tonal and temporal intensity is maintained right through the *pianissimo* indication in m. 48 and into the second iteration of the chordal material in m. 49 - 52. Rather than contrast this middle section material from its surroundings by narrowing one's tonal and temporal palette as a modern pianist might do, this approach achieves the opposite and as a result this material rhapsodizes, pleads and delights rather than cogitates.

After once again shortening the value of the long note value at 52.1, the final statement of the opening subject features rushing, widespread dislocation, and complete asynchrony between the hands as well as between the right hand's upper and inner lines, the latter of which is forcefully favoured. Having stormed into the final stretched triplet upbeat of the work at 56.3, m. 57 - 59 are played in a rather rhythmically ambiguous manner, while the middle section material returns briefly and is played much as before. Much like Eibenschütz's doubling of the F#s in the B section of Op. 118 no. 3 however, the Es at 61.1 are played twice: once as part of the arpeggiated right-hand octave, and once by the independently meandering left hand. The brief return of the transitional material in the final measures of this work is again shaped with combinations of rhythmic alteration, rushing, arpeggiation and elision; thereby imparting some exuberance to material that otherwise tends to be played in a resignedly introspective manner.

Indeed, by rushing through most phrase groups here while blurring their outer demarcations and wrenching apart their insides, qualities fairly unheard of in modern performances of this work emerge: shadowy longing, clamorous discontent and effusive joy. You can hear my performance of this work in Sound Ex. 5.2.1b while following

along with Score Ex. 5.2.1b. Because the elements of this recordings-inspired approach have not been in any way 'fixed' or rehearsed, I have only provided lightly annotated scores for these experimental performances. While I have described general tendencies and intentions here, I fully expect (and perhaps even hope) that subtle variations will be audible in my recorded snapshots.

5.2.2) *Intermezzo in E Minor* Op. 116 no. 5[470]

a) Contemporary Brahms Style

While modern pianists are keenly aware of the presence of some ambiguous and ephemeral quality in this sphinx-like little work, they are relegated to communicating this content through tone colour and attack alone, while controlling the detail and structure of its container in the ways to which they are so accustomed in Brahms's piano music. As in all matters of emotional content in this repertoire, the ineffable is understood to emerge only through the detailed, literal, structural, regular and controlled performance of a thoroughly resolved outer carapace. This inability to escape the strictures of contemporary Brahms style results in performances that can often seem awkward and insincere rather than mysterious. Though hardly the most challenging work in pianists' repertoires, many admit to performing this *Intermezzo* grudgingly, and it is not uncommon to see titans of the keyboard anxiously searching for its notes in performance, brow furrowed, shoulders hunched and hands contorted.

[470] Parts of this material were jointly developed and presented with Darla Crispin as part of a lecture-performance given at the Orpheus Institute's 2012 ORCiM Research Festival.

In this work's opening A section, some control can be achieved from a rhythmic point of view by maintaining a consistent tempo, by observing all note and rest values exactly, and by maintaining a clear sense of the underlying pulse and divisions of the measure. Though a common feature of Brahms's late piano works, the impulse to resolve his treatment of hemiola seems particularly pressing here. Because the slurred couplets of this work's A section are arranged across the bar lines, pianists must decide where the temporal emphasis of each measure should fall. While emphasizing the upbeats here respects both the classical 'down-up' approach to shaping two-note slurs as well as late 19th-century Viennese waltz rhetoric, this approach can make the rests feel too long, while making the couplets sound choppy and vertical. By 'moving to' downbeats on the other hand, a horizontal impulse forward is initiated, the temporal ordering quality of the bar lines is respected, and the unification of the couplets becomes easier, thereby helping the ear to push through the interruptions of the rests.

In a ploy to make sense of the distinctly unBrahmsian texture of these materials, pianists will often further link its eerily stilted couplet slurs into one overarching twelve-measure phrase group by maintaining a consistent approach to tone and attack, with the notes of each chord being played firmly, simultaneously, and to the bottoms of the keys: no small feat given that Brahms has arranged the notes of the chords coinciding with upbeats so that they must be played with crossed thumbs, with the rest of the fingers spread wide and palms wrenched together. For some chords, the right-hand thumb must pass below the left, while other times it's best played above: a negotiation rife with the potential for lapses of timing, memory, coordination, as well as missed or not fully

sounding notes. Once accomplished, the pianist must then leap outwards to reach the next chord, and then back again to the centre of the keyboard, thumbs crossed.

Anticipating this physical conundrum, in an 1892 letter to Clara Schumann Brahms writes: "In the little E Minor piece, it's probably better if you always take the 6th eighth as indicated on the first beat, in parentheses. Of course, the peculiar appeal which is always connected with a difficulty is then lost, as here, the strong pliant curve of the hand – of large hands!"[471] Within these parentheses in the attached score, Brahms had simply exchanged the notes played by each thumb, leaving two discrete triads in closed position. Because Brahms's solution survives in modern editions of this work pianists tend to regard it as evidence of composer intent: if his own *ossia* affords more technically secure performances, then its ethos should apply even when playing with the original fingering.

When the B section finally arrives, pianists contrast it from the surrounding A section materials by celebrating its ringing bass notes, clearer melodic focus, more intuitive rhythmic organization and relative technical ease with a slightly relaxed approach to tempo, a more resonant tone, and an amplified dynamic range. When the A section materials do return they are played much as before, with the inner voice of the right hand being brought out in the chordal closing measures through tone and attack alone. Sviatoslav Richter's 1992 live performance of this work is available on Doremi's CD entitled "Legendary Treasures vol. 12," but you can watch it in Sound Ex. 5.2.2a while following along with Score Ex. 5.2.2a. If you watch very closely, you can see Richter panic every so slightly while negotiating the thumb crossing on the sixth eighth

[471] *Clara Schumann: ein Künstlerleben*, III: 562 - 63, in Avins, *BLL*, 698.

note of m. 32. While this particular chord is executed much more smoothly upon repetition, he plays quite insecurely right before it and uses a touch of pedal to cover his tracks - perhaps in anticipation of another near-disaster.

b) Recordings-Inspired Brahms Style

Brahms's assertion that his *ossia* version is 'probably better' most likely refers to a physically debilitating ailment that struck Clara Schumann around the time he penned this work. Indeed as we have already seen, later in life Brahms was wrestling with the weakened minds and bodies of many of those closest to him, including his own. Perhaps he was also thinking of the 'small hands' of their many fine pupils: young women like Adelina De Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz, with whose technical apparatuses he was so familiar. The most telling part of Brahms's letter however, might be his reference to what is lost when 'the peculiar appeal that is always connected with a difficulty' is eliminated. Brahms seems to have been sure that Clara would understood that the 'peculiar appeal' to which he referred lay not only in the bodily implications of the awkward *pas de pouces* written into the fabric of this work, but in how a performer's sense of insecurity and fallibility translates into aesthetic experience. As we have already seen, De Lara's approach was characterized by the emphasis of inner 'thumb lines,' while Brahms is known to have jokingly asked listeners to "admire the gentle sonority of his 'tenor thumb.'"[472] It's possible therefore that a performer's unsound state of mind and body lies at the heart of what this piece 'tells of.' If so, then a provocative performance of this

[472] Ethel Smyth, *Impressions*, I: 266, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 124.

work might be one in which this insoluble quality is allowed to emerge from behind the controlled curtain of contemporary Brahms style.

A good place to start might be to mimic both De Lara and Eibenschütz's tendency to shape larger phrase groups by playing more slowly at their outer edges and faster over their middles. In the opening A section of this work, this would mean anticipating the *crescendo* in m. 5 by starting to rush as early as m. 2 or 3, just as De Lara anticipates the *crescendo* in the second subject of Op. 79 no. 2. In so doing however, the more physically challenging thumb-crossings and leaps in m. 5 - 9 end up being played extremely quickly as a result, leading to an increased sense of risk. Where careful control of tone and rhythm once provided a unifying solution to the ambiguous potentialities of this *Intermezzo*, the pianist now suddenly finds herself at their mercy. While rushing, the temporal spaces between each couplet suddenly become more and more constricted, meaning one has less time to ensure that the notes of each chord sound simultaneously and fully to the beds of the keys. The lag in hand-ear coordination that results from this tonal and temporal instability is not unlike that experienced when mimicking De Lara's performance of the martial transitional subject of Op. 79 no. 2, where her rhythmic alterations, rushing and arpeggiations collude to rob one of the time and space needed to navigate and orient the mind and body. If temporal and tonal irregularity leads to technical insecurity, then rushing over the most difficult and awkward measures of this section is risky business indeed.

Inspired by De Lara's tendency to emphasize the contours of phrases large and small with both time and tonal emphasis, what if instead of trying to decide whether to move 'from' upbeats or 'to' downbeats, the pianist applies emphasis according to the

proximity of her thumbs: by playing with either dislocation or arpeggiation when the thumbs overlap or move towards one another, and by playing with less emphasis when they are wrenched apart. In the opening measures of this work we see that these points of convergence coincide with the outer edges of couplets grouped in pairs. When deciding whether to use dislocation or arpeggiation for this local emphasis, what happens if we then follow De Lara's example in her performance of Op. 117 no. 1 and use the former at the slower outer edges of this section and the latter over its faster middle. Arpeggiation over these faster and more technically problematic measures naturally only adds to their tonal, temporal and technical uncertainty.

In so doing, one ends up with an approach to emphasizing materials with tone and time on both a small and large scale that is as deliberate as it is oceans away from the tenuous control of modern performances. Indeed, the result is thus not one of a regular pulse but more like that of the gravitational and elliptical orbits of celestial bodies. Because this tonal and temporal emphasis doesn't occur with predictable regularity, and because it increases rather than alleviates insecurity, something ambiguously impressionistic, unsolved and confounding is allowed to emerge. It is perhaps fitting therefore that De Lara primarily inspires this approach, as not only does she seem to have been less technically equipped than her studio mate, but she also seems to have had a special appreciation for the thumbs. Furthermore, placing emphasis here where these thumbs collide, hands tilted awkwardly towards one another in 'the pliant curve' alluded to by Brahms himself, also seems reminiscent of De Lara's 'inner' approach to the weight and motion of the hands.

While modern pianists immediately begin to play the B section materials of this work with an amplified dynamic range and a more resonant tone and attack, what if m. 11 - 13 are instead played rather nondescriptly; using dislocation and rhythmic alterations to 'straighten' out the quarter-eighth note relationships, while rushing into and through the outset of the more lyrical material in m. 15. When this material does arrive, impatiently dislocated bass notes and further rushing then anticipate the *crescendo* of m. 17. Like the A section, these middle measures contain many perilous leaps in both hands, and especially between the third eighth and bass note of the left hand: the latter of which sounds even earlier due to dislocation, thereby constricting the amount of time one has to accomplish the leap. Once stripped of its relative lyricism, regularity and technical security, this B section becomes every bit as elusive, puzzling and risky as its bookends. The resulting subversion of contrast between the sections of this work is also highly reminiscent of Ilona Eibenschütz's approach to both Op. 118 no. 3 and Op. 119 no. 2.

Much like Eibenschütz might do, temporal and tonal intensity is then maintained right through the *dolce* at the outset of the transitional material in m. 25, where left- and right-hand materials become elided through arpeggiation, and where any sense of a clear and regular pulse is lost. These elisions and their resulting ambiguity are then carried right into the outset of the new section at m. 29, with time only being taken after it begins. After this brief statement of the A section material is shaped as before on both a small and large scale, dislocation, arpeggiation and elision are used to delineate inner voices during the final measures of the work, within a rather free time feel. You can hear my performance of this work in Sound Ex. 5.2.2b while following along with Score Ex. 5.2.2b.

5.2.3) *Intermezzo in B Minor* Op. 119 no. 1

a) Contemporary Brahms Style

With this miniature we return to the realm of what might be called 'characteristic' Brahmsian musical materials. As such, modern pianists tend to phrase its A section into two overarching eight-measure phrase groups; taking time at their ends in m. 8 and 16, at the apexes of the expressive hairpins in m. 4 - 5 and 7 - 8, and throughout the rhythmic, textural and articulation details of m. 12 - 13. Some pianists will also emphasize the half-hairpins above m. 1 - 3 and 9 by slightly elongating downbeats. As ever however, tempo is always firmly reasserted after each instance of slowing, a clear sense of the pulse and divisions of the measure are maintained, and notes and rests are given their full and proportional value. In such a succinct work it is also vital that instances of slowing are carried out according to the principles of structural playing; with the most time being taken at the end of the section in m. 16, slightly less at the end of the first phrase group in 8, and even less taken at the apex of the local hairpin in m. 4 - 5. This hierarchical approach to structural slowing and the ever-important reestablishment of tempo afterwards ensures that this A section is ruled by a serious and resigned quality rather than a lamenting, rapturous or wistful one. This characteristic Brahmsian stoicism is further underlined through the maintenance of a consistent approach to tone and attack within a fairly narrow tonal palette, while focusing on the production of a clear and connected upper melodic line.

Contrast is achieved in the B section with pianists adopting a fuller, warmer and more resonant approach to tone and attack while paying more attention to the elucidation of inner melodies, though never to the detriment of the clarity and focus of the upper melodic line. Unnotated time is often taken as early as m. 20 to delineate the start of the *crescendo* in m. 22, as well as at its climax in m. 24; while time is taken into the reprise of the section's primary subject at m. 31 and over the work's climax in m. 37 - 38. To reign in the B section's impassioned climaxes and stormier passages however, between these instances of slowing pianists maintain a strictly regular tempo and avoid rushing at all costs. With the return of the A section in m. 47 pianists tend to thoroughly reset their tonal and temporal palette, rendering its slightly elaborated materials almost exactly as before. Regarding these elaborations, pianists are careful to preserve the triplet - duplet relationship between the descending inner line and the upper soprano line, thereby upholding a regular sense of pulse. Finally, as in m. 12 - 13 pianists will use subtle manipulations of tone and time to shape the textural, rhythmic and articulation details in m. 58 - 64, before bringing the work to a close.

When searching for a representative performance of this work I decided upon a one by Hélène Grimaud. Of the handful of pianists considered to be 'Brahmsians,' Grimaud is perhaps the *only* woman: something that should give us serious pause, given that the majority of pianists in Brahms's life were women. Grimaud's performance of this work however is anything but typical. While it perhaps seems odd to provide an outlying example having just discussed how this work tends to be performed by a majority of pianists today, including Grimaud here is an opportunity to make an important point concerning eccentric contemporary Brahms performance styles. In a review of her 1997

recital at Alice Tully Hall, Allan Kozinn rightly notes Grimaud's impressive technical arsenal, the beauty of her tone and attack in lyrical passages, as well as "the kind of flexibility that allows her to convey the illusion of improvisatory freshness" in her interpretive style. One begins to get the sense that Grimaud is something of an atypical Brahmsian however, when Kozinn notes:

> Brahms's most passionate and tempestuous music, in her readings, evoked the spirit of Chopin more than, say, Beethoven or Schumann, Brahms's closer antecedents. In the abstract, Brahms and Chopin seem a world apart. Miss Grimaud's performances argued persuasively that there are connections. Stranger still, yet equally compelling, was her use of an almost Debussian approach to timbre in the more introspective of the Fantasies and Intermezzos. Impressionistic hues and hazy textures may seem foreign to Brahms, but Miss Grimaud proved that the implications are within the music.[473]

Many elements of Grimaud's approach to this work indeed set her apart. In the A section for example, rather than standing stalwartly upright her tempo leans slightly to the right: both at the level of the measure, where one senses a slight inequality in note values; and at the level of the phrase group, where her tempo modifications include both expressive slowing as well as subtle rushing. She also makes sparing use of dislocation, like at the apex of the hairpin in m. 5, for example. These dislocations become more frequent in the B section however, where she disjoints the hands for emphasis in m. 18 - 20 and 41, and to aid with the voicing of inner lines in m. 31 - 32. Her time feel is again slightly restless here as she stretches some right-hand entries coinciding with hairpins in

[473] Alan Kozinn, "In a Pianist's Brahms, A Chopinesque Esprit," review of Hélène Grimaud (piano), in *The New York Times* (February 19, 1997), accessed August 6, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/1997/02/19/arts/in-a-pianist-s-brahms-a-chopinesque-esprit.html.

m. 17 - 18, before rushing ever so slightly into the *crescendo* in m. 23. Interestingly, at the close of the B section she takes much more unnotated time over the tail end of the hairpin in m. 41 - 42 than she does at the *rit*. indication in m. 45 - 46. Finally, her approach to the A^1 section is very similar to that which came before, only here she uses an Adelina De Lara level of dislocation and arpeggiation in m. 58 - 64 to elucidate the passage's many beautiful complexities.

While these details indeed lend a quality of improvisatory freshness to Grimaud's performance, Kozinn's identification of a Chopinesque or Debussian spirit in her playing is more a testament to the rigidity and specificity of contemporary Brahms performance norms, than to any real eccentricity in Grimaud's style. She is considered to be a Brahmsian pianist precisely because her style conforms with the pillars of contemporary Brahms pianism in that it is literal, detailed, structural, temporally-measured, and expressively and technically controlled. Her phrase groups and sections have clearly defined slower outer edges; she maintains an underlying sense of the pulse and the divisions of measures throughout; downbeats, apexes of hairpins and local complexities are shaped and emphasized by the slight taking of time, with tempo being re-established afterwards; nothing is added, removed or altered, and she is meticulous with regards to articulation markings; and she maintains consistency within and contrast between sections. Her sparing use of dislocation serves to highlight detail, though not to the detriment of structure; while her instances of rushing serve to elucidate structure and create contrast both within and between sections, while never blurring detail.

The point of all this is that in spite of all the beautifully anomalous features of Grimaud's performance, it still sits fairly comfortably with contemporary Brahms

performance norms. This is perhaps something to bear in mind when experimenting with early-recorded style, especially when attempting to problematize our investment in contemporary Brahms style and its underlying ideology. To create performances that do this *at least* as much as those of the Schumann-Brahms pupils, we need to meddle with the beating heart of what it means to be a Brahmsian pianist. You can listen to Hélène Grimaud's performance of this work in Sound Ex. 5.2.3a while following along with Score Ex. 5.2.3a.

b) Recordings-Inspired Brahms Style

As a final comment on what it might take to play Brahms's late piano music in a recordings-inspired way, in this work I was primarily inspired by Ilona Eibenschütz's approach, and in particular by her blurring of the outer boundaries of structures big and small; her tendency to take time after new phrase groups have already begun; her use of rhythmic alterations for emphasis and effect; and her truncation of materials deemed to be superfluous. In the first phrase group, I dislocate almost everywhere and begin to rush almost immediately, with the last sixteenth note of the upper right-hand melody sounding early; and while I take a slight amount of time to emphasize the apex of the local hairpin in m. 5 - 6, I rush right through its end much like Eibenschütz does in the opening measures of Op. 119 no. 2. After again taking time at the apex of the next hairpin in m. 7 - 8, I rush straight through the downbeat of the new phrase group in m. 9, taking time only after it has begun. Instead of taking time to highlight and shape the articulation, rhythmic and textural details of m. 12 - 13 as modern pianists do, I instead continue to

rush; I dislocate most left-hand materials freely; I elide the upbeats to m. 13, 14 and 16 with the downbeats they precede through arpeggiation; and I adopt a casual approach to rest and note values. As such, the details and structure of this section become shifting, restless and hazy, as if furtively remembered rather than pondered.

After ignoring the *rit*. indication in m. 16 and rushing straight through the structural boundary that divides the A and B sections, I again take time only after the latter has begun. For the sake of voicing inner lines I dislocate many lower right-hand notes from their upper counterparts, and in m. 18 - 19 I slightly 'swing' right-hand sixteenth notes, creating a lilting time-feel that is not unlike that of De Lara's performance of the A section materials of Op. 117 no. 1. The cavalier quality conveyed by these rhythmic alterations however soon gives way to wholesale rushing when the left-hand note at 20.3 is sounded early. After playing the climax of the *crescendo* in m. 24 - 26 with arpeggiation, dislocation and disjointedness of the hands, I maintain temporal and tonal intensity right into and through the reprise of the section's main theme in m. 31, again taking time after it has begun.

After using dislocation and more 'swung' sixteenth notes to delineate the right hand's dual melodic lines in m. 31 - 32, I then begin to rush dramatically over the hairpin starting in m. 33; I roll left-hand octaves for extra temporal drive; and as I rush I truncate about a full beat between 34.2 and 35.2. Over the climax of the work in m. 37 - 38 I then play the last two sixteenth notes of each left-hand triplet simultaneously, thereby imitating the arrangement of the right-hand figures; each hand's materials become disjointed through dislocation and further rushing; and I again cut about a full beat between 38.2 and 39.2, thereby firmly and thoroughly negating any sense of an

underlying pulse or logical division of the measure. This combination of rushing, dislocation and truncation thoroughly subverts the rhythmic, melodic, textural and harmonic organization of this work's climax, leading to a feeling of heightened volatility that only reinforces its importance. Indeed, it can be illuminating to observe how the topography of musical works shifts when their climatic materials are 'emphasized' through undercutting rather than through accentuation.

Instead of reducing temporal and tonal intensity in any significant way over the half-hairpins of m. 39 - 42 or even at the *rit*. - *diminuendo* indication in m. 45, I again push right through the return of the A section material, taking time after it as begun. This section then proceeds as before, only with the rhythmic relationship between the triplet and duplet figures of the elaborated main subject becoming blurred through further rushing and rhythmic alteration. In a final nod to Ilona Eibenschütz, I take an enormous amount of time in m. 57, thereby detracting from both the notated slowing in m. 61 and the much more important structural slowing at the work's close. You can hear my performance of this work in Sound Ex. 5.2.3b, while following along with the annotated score in Score Ex. 5.2.3b.

6) Discussion of Results and Conclusions

Whether or not their artistic practices are consciously guided by ethical principles such as historical authenticity, modern pianists continue to be highly invested in notions related to the characteristics of 'proper' Brahms style. This understanding of what makes a performance recognisably Brahmsian is reinforced by widely accepted norms for the interpretation of Johannes Brahms's piano music: precepts whose prescriptive language and sounding outcomes are believed to be at least partly rooted in historical fact, thereby leading to performances that Brahms himself might recognize or that preserve something of his intentions. Seemingly buttressed by nineteenth-century verbal accounts of Brahms's musical contexts, these performance norms are however less reconcilable with the composer's own 1889 cylinder recording and with the recordings of his pupils. Given pianists' continued adherence to the mores of modern Brahms style and their either tacit or explicit faith in its historical verity, this thesis initially asked why their performances are so unlike those of the composer and his pupils.

Theories that posit changing tastes and performance standards as the interstitial padding that keeps early-recorded Brahms style at arm's length from modern Brahms style overlook the fact that early recordings of Frédéric Chopin's, Robert Schumann's and Franz Liszt's piano music have in recent years been warmly received by performers and consumers of classical music alike, while Brahms's music as performed by those who knew him can trigger near allergic reactions and suspicious attitudes regarding the value of early recordings as evidence of late-Romantic style. I hypothesized that this is because

early-recorded Brahmsian pianism collides as much with the supposedly historically grounded precepts of modern Brahms style as it does with prevailing aesthetic notions concerning the composer's rarefied canonic identity.

While Kevin Korsyn argues that modern Brahms scholarship is ruled by an aesthetic ideology of unity, whereby understandings of the composer's mastery of formal procedures have led to the elevation of narratives like cohesiveness and integrity, and the suppression of those of heterogeneity and complexity, by questioning the performative implications of these themes I hypothesized that all activities in the spheres of Brahms scholarship and performance are in fact mediated by a pervasive aesthetic ideology of control. Like both coherence and complexity, the language of modern Brahms style is rooted in deep mental and corporeal restraint: parameters understood to distinguish Brahms's identity from those of his Romantic contemporaries. This relativist understanding of Brahmsian identity is protected by norms dictating that performances of his music are to be expressively- and technically-controlled in general, and literal, detailed, structural, and tonally- and temporally-measured in particular. Because early-recorded Brahms style clashes with modern understandings of Brahmsian identity and its associated performance norms, I hypothesized that the aesthetic ideology of control mediates how evidence of Brahms's musical contexts is collected and then translated into musical acts; leading pianists to shape his music in ways that might never have occurred to him while still believing in the historical validity of their performances.

This thesis thus sought to better elucidate the origins of the Brahmsian aesthetic ideology of control and the modes by which it is currently reinforced in scholarly and performance spheres, thereby resulting in persistent gaps between what pianists believe,

know and do. It also asked what happens to understandings of Brahmsian identity when documentary and sounding evidence of the composer's musical contexts is applied at the piano with the intention of problematizing rather than reaffirming the aesthetic ideology of control. It was hypothesized that this would catalyse a critical shift in our understanding of Brahmsian identity to one that includes rather than suppresses the emotional and physical inhibitions and fallibilities more typically associated with Romantic pianism; that this shift would open up a palette of expressive and technical resources previously suppressed by the precepts of modern Brahms style; and that these resources, when applied experimentally, would reveal new insights into just how historically-informed modern pianists are prepared to be, thereby further elucidating the gaps between modern Brahms style and Brahms as he was recorded.

In the first chapter entitled “Brahmsian Minds and Bodies: The Aesthetic Ideology of Control,” we saw how pianists who understand what it means when someone describes their performances as 'a little too Schumann and not enough Brahms' are the inheritors of powerful ideas concerning Brahms's canonic identity. These notions were shown to have been borne of contemporaneous polemics in which Brahms's supporters fought to distance his controlled mind and body from the "utter degeneracy"[474] of the New German School composers' colouristic, theatrical, superficial, sentimental and virtuosic musical practices on one hand, and their excesses, weaknesses, diseases and lunacies on the other. As the language of these dialectics is ripe with bodily and psychological implications, like Goethe's assertion that "the works of today are Romantic...because they are weak, sickly or sick...[while] the old works are

[474] Deiters, "Johannes Brahms," 11.

Classical...because they are energetic, hale and hearty,"[475] the historical documentary record is resplendent with explicit references to Brahms's inner and outer control, thereby reinforcing modern beliefs in the authenticity of his canonic identity as "historical rather than futuristic, traditional rather than ground breaking, and ultimately classical rather than *echt romantisch*."[476] The principle themes of these polemics were then shown to have informed the language of modern Brahms style and its associated performance norms, as demonstrated by extracts of modern reviews of concerts and recordings.

While Brahms's supporters emphasized the logic and rigor of his compositions and his predilection for academicism and broody introspectiveness, his critics' accusations that he was "a commonplace and mechanical music-spinner who could write an elaborate work without once exhibiting so much as a momentary flicker of divine fire," underlined his contempt for ego-driven pursuits like sentimentality, effect and virtuosity: themes reinforced in modern concert reviews, with Brahmsian pianists being praised for their "patrician disregard for all forms of bloated excess or exaggeration."[477] Brahms's mind is also understood to have been behind his "intense involvement with the music of the past": one "bolstered by the expectation of a poetic future, and shaped by a critical awareness of the present." His identity as the artist "out of joint with his times"[478] is similarly reinforced in modern performance spheres, with pianists being expected to avoid overt Romantic markers like extreme temporal and tonal fluctuations, and to instead adopt a performer-neutral approach like that of Radu Lupu, who "sits down at the

---

[475] Goethe, in Sainte-Beuve, *Selected Essays*, trans. and ed. Steegmuller and Guterman, 5.
[476] Beller-McKenna, *Brahms and the German Spirit*, in Moseley, "Is There only Juan Brahms?" 162.
[477] Parker, "Music and the Grand Style," 178 - 79; Morrison, "Brahms - Handel Variations," http://www.gramophone.co.uk/chart/review/brahms-handel-variations.
[478] Grimes, "In Search of Absolute Inwardness," 143 - 44; Kerman, "Counsel for the Defense," 442 - 43, in Korsyn, "Brahms Research and Aesthetic Ideology," 89.

piano like a court stenographer at a tedious trial, and proceeds dispassionately to do his job…[with] poetic seriousness rendered by what might be called self-effacing technique." This approach is also fuelled by contemporaneous descriptions in which Brahms's stoic, hermitic, and even ascetic tendencies are framed as evidence that his "real life, the object of all his sympathies and energies, [was] that which passe[d] within."[479]

Throughout the expressly biblical and nationalistic language of these polemics, Brahms's internal control is implicated in narratives concerning his moral and ethical nature, the "catholicity of his taste," his commitment to the "eternal religion" of Classical form and counterpoint, and his role as "the guardian of German music."[480] In their attacks on the structural ambiguity of Wagner's works, we have seen how Brahms's supporters held up the unity of his works as proof of an equally coherent mind: one capable of creating music that was "not painted word by word, but as a whole, and consequently structural interests never suffer[ed]."[481] While Brahms's opponents asserted that his works were scientific, inhuman and artificial, these narratives all continue to fuel expectations that modern Brahms performances are to be structural above all else.

We have also seen how late-Romantic accounts of Brahms's body have informed the language of modern Brahms style, with pianists being praised for energetic yet modest displays of physical power, like Garrick Ohlsson who "produce[s] great masses of sound that never bec[o]me clangourous."[482] While Brahms's industry, economy and

---

[479] Rockwell, "German Bill," review of Radu Lupu (piano), in *New York Times Music Review* (January 29, 1991); Deiters, "Johannes Brahms," 10.
[480] "Johannes Brahms," *The Musical Times* (May 1, 1897): 298 - 99; Schenker, quoted and trans. by Mast, "Commentary," 151, in Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 280; Kalbeck, "Feuilleton: Johannes Brahms," *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* (7 May 1897): 1, in McColl, "A Model German," 10.
[481] Walker, "Brahms," 124.
[482] Oestreich, "The Piano at Full Power," review of Garrick Ohlsson (piano), in *New York Times Music Review* (January 12, 1998).

humility are underlined in descriptions of the unassuming nature of his mode of dress and manners; his self-restraint is emphasized in accounts that he was “as temperate in drink as in meats...[because] he is too keenly conscious of the[ir] depressing effects."[483]

Modern performances described as characteristically Brahmsian also tend to be imbued with highly gendered language. In polemics designed to conflate the New Germans' practices with the less controlled state of femininity, Brahms's supporters assert that his music "is the outcome of a thoroughly masculine nature," that his "harmony is robust, never effeminate," and that like Bach's music, Brahms's is "strong, deep, vigorous, flowing, steady and true like a great river, and not a thing of erratic bubbles and splashes."[484] This language lives on today, with typically Brahmsian performances being described as manly, robust, martial and agile; or with innuendo-laden terms like deep, virile, vigorous, thrusting and penetrating. After Robert Schumann designates him as the 'Messiah of German Music,' so too does the German-ness of Brahms's body become a ubiquitous rallying cry amongst those aghast at the New Germans' claims of hyper-nationalism. We have seen how such currents generated much of the language of modern Brahms style, from words like universal, objective and timeless; to athletic, outdoorsy, vital, and healthy; to those filtered through a post-WWII lens like imposing, dour, sober, emotionally limited, square, pure, and conservative.

While the language of modern Brahms style was born of polemics between those vying to claim a foothold in a nascent musical canon, it is also clearly linked to contemporaneous conflations of health and aesthetic evaluation. Indeed, the single-

---

[483] Rogers, "Genius and Health," 515.
[484] "Manliness in Music," 460; Adler and Strunk, "Johannes Brahms," 129; D. C. Parker, "Music and the Grand Style," 163 - 64.

minded fervour of each side of the Brahms-Wagner debate even drew accusations of pathological fixation on an *idée fixe,* or monomania. Viewed in art circles as a "quintessentially Romantic illness,"[485] a linkage of insanity and artistic genius that Brahms's supporters desperately fought to subvert, monomania was understood to manifest in creative, introverted, sentimental, passionate and heroic figures, and to result in obsession, melancholy, restlessness, hallucinations, suicidal despair, madness, and even death. In medical spheres, monomania was also understood to affect those with "minds of a meditative and exclusive cast, which seem to be susceptible only of a series of thoughts and emotions; individuals who, through self-love, vanity, pride, and ambition, abandon themselves to their reflections, to exaggerated projects and unwarrantable pretensions."[486] As these descriptors encapsulated everything Brahms's supporters so despised in the New Germans' practices in general, and in Berlioz's musico-erotic monomaniacal delusions in particular, they had all the more reason to link Brahms's particular brand of genius not only with the control of his mind but with its health as well.

The symptoms of monomania however bore an unfortunate resemblance to Robert Schumann's own malignant obsessions, hallucinations, suicidal despair, and death. I argued that well-meaning assertions that Brahms "knocks into the proverbial cocked hat the idea that genius inhabits an unsound brain and crazy body"[487] implicated his beloved mentor with those practices deemed to be less sound. While Brahms's critics invoked themes of surgery to attack the academicism of his music, this narrative continues to be enthusiastically taken up by those underlining his trajectory away from the rambling and fragmentary Schumannism of his youthful works towards the clear-eyed coherence of his

[485] Brittan, "Berlioz," 228.
[486] Esquirol, *Des maladies mentales,* II, 29, in Ibid., 221.
[487] Rogers, "The Health of Musicians," 620.

later style. Though Roger Moseley and Siegfried Kross discuss how Brahms later excised the formal corruptions of earlier works like the *Trio* Op. 8 in favour of clarity, concision, organic integrity and the primacy of sonata form; in light of the evidence put forth in this chapter I asserted that these corruptions represented something much more insidious to Brahms's supporters: namely, Schumann's diseased mind and body, and both men's musico-psychological fixation with E. T. A. Hoffman's Kapellmeister Kreisler.

We have seen how the young Brahms revelled in Hoffman's *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier* and *Kater Murr*: tales detailing the restless and fantastic adventures of Kreisler, with whom Brahms and Schumann deeply identified. While the story of Kreisler's life is recounted in *Kater Murr* in a fragmented narrative style that may have indeed informed the capricious, shifting, allusive and episodic quality of Brahms's earlier musical style, his youthful letters suggest that these qualities had permeated his consciousness as well. He signed many of his letters and compositions *Joh. Kreisler jun*., and is reported to have been "chock-full of crazy notions" and to have painted "his apartment full of the most beautiful frescoes in the manner of *Callot*." In a letter that seemingly evidences his struggle to expunge these tendencies and adopt a more formally rigorous style, Brahms reports: "I often quarrel with myself – that is, Kreisler and Brahms quarrel with one another. But usually each has his decided opinion and fights it out. This time...both were quite confused, neither knew what he wanted."[488]

While Brahms's outward compositional trajectory from restless fragmentation to unified coherence indeed seems to reflect Kreisler's metamorphosis in *Kater Murr,* whereby the "fragmentary [and] bizarre character" of his artistic work disappears and he becomes "a calm, thoughtful man who, no longer buzzing wildly around in vague,

[488] Joachim, *Briefwechsel* 5 and *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, I, 9, in Avins, *BLL*, 42, 51.

endless spaces, holds firmly to the established path,"[489] I argued that I was less convinced of Brahms's inner resolution of his early Schumannian and Kreislerian tendencies. Firstly, this resolution was externally imposed by scathing criticisms of the formal failings of his earlier works; secondly, Brahms's letters reveal his lifelong love for Schumann and the importance of the latter's memory to the extra-musical content of his later compositions; and thirdly, Moseley's and Kross's metanarrative of notational resolution doesn't account for issues of performance style. Indeed, while Brahms's later revised version of his *Trio* Op. 8 may be more formally coherent than its earlier conception, we have seen how many of the Schumann-Brahms pianists didn't 'play' structure at all, or at least, not in the ways we've come to expect. Their performances of the surgically precise detail and structure of Brahms's late piano works are instead rather aptly characterised as capricious, shifting, allusive and episodic.

It was thus my assertion that Brahmsians past and present have framed the resolution of Brahms's outward musical language to fit a metanarrative of internal control: one designed to distance him from the comorbidity of insanity and Romanticism as represented by Berlioz, and the added threat of corporeal disintegration should one's mental affliction go unresolved, as exemplified by Schumann. Expanding upon Joseph N. Straus's and Edward T. Cone's discussion of Schubertian intersections of music, madness and disease, I suggested that Schumann was the promissory note in Brahms's evolving and public canonic body: one that needed to be purged lest it "burs[t] out with even greater force, revealing itself as basically inimical to its surroundings, which it proceeds to demolish."[490] Brahms's internal resolution of his Schumannian past however, is not

[489] Hoffman, *Kater Murr*, 233, 216, in Kross, "Brahms," 199.
[490] Cone, "Schubert's Promissory Note," 233 - 41, in Straus, "Normalizing," 150.

satisfactorily demonstrated by studies based on the notational features of his works or on agenda-laden accounts of his biography. While such discourse indeed paints a picture that fulfils Brahms's prophetic assertion that if he ever lost the name Kreisler he would "withdraw as a hermit into the solitude of an office and lose [himself] in silent contemplation of the documents to be copied,"[491] his letters and performance contexts suggest that this retreat was and still is accomplished primarily in the imaginations of his most ardent supporters.

Though Brahms and many of these supporters destroyed much of what they perceived to be incriminating pieces of personal correspondence, given the tirelessness of their campaigns to fashion his burgeoning canonic identity into one of supreme control it is likely that these excised letters evidenced his experience of less restrained physical and psychological states. Nevertheless, in the second chapter entitled "The Lullabies of My Sorrows: Brahms's Late Piano Works Op. 116 - 119," I argued that Brahms's letters *still* resist current understandings of his canonic identity, especially as related to the extra-musical content of his late piano works. While Straus asserts that composers' late styles can include qualities of solitude, alienation, concision, authorial belatedness, anachronism and nostalgia, themes indeed invoked at length in scholarly discussions of Brahmsian lateness, I argued that such narratives tend to be explored in ways that underline the composer's control. Strauss, Moseley and Margaret Notley for example, link the presence of these qualities in Brahms's late music to his deference to the music of the past, his Classical lineage, his commitment to his principles, and his liberal open-mindedness.

---

[491] *Briefweschel*, v, in Avins, *BLL*, 12.

While Straus also asserts that late style works can represent "impaired bodies or minds and their failure to function in a normal way,"[492] I further argued that it is no wonder that such themes are notably absent with respect to a composer whose identity seems so deliberately constructed to repel questions of illness and instability. Introduced by Schumann as "a musician who would reveal his mastery not in gradual stages but like Minerva would spring fully armed from Kronos's head," and memorialized as having "passed away before any sign of weakness or senility was apparent in [his] work,"[493] Brahms's lifelong sturdiness continues to be underlined in discussions of his late style. Even discourse that raises extra-musical tropes such as his despair over the deaths of those closest to him later in life still emphasizes the resigned nature of that sadness or, as Ernest Walker puts it in 1899, his "acceptance of the facts of things"[494]: themes leading to performances of his late works that are serious, portentous and static.

We have seen however that Brahms's later feelings of alienation and solitude actually seem to have been precipitated much earlier by the loss of Robert Schumann in 1856 and his mother Christiane just nine years later. While events surrounding Schumann's earlier suicide attempt and hospitalization brought the young Brahms into Clara Schumann's Düsseldorf home, a domestic environment in which he both revelled and despaired, so too did the death of his mother conjure both painful and joyous memories of his troubled childhood home in Hamburg. As Brahms would later recall both households with a potent mixture of delight, wistfulness and pain, already one senses the seeds of a dynamic rather than resigned brand of nostalgia.

---

[492] Straus, "Disability and 'Late Style,'" 12.
[493] Schumann, "Neue Bahnen," *NZfM* 39, no. 18 (1853): 185 - 86, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 66; "Brahms," *The Musical Times* (May 1, 1897): 297.
[494] Walker, "Brahms," 128.

Brahms's letters from the 1850s also evidence his experience of other less controlled mental and physical states; the disintegration of the man with whom he shared his early Kreisler affinities and his infatuation with Clara having shaken him to the core. As Brahms hadn't produced a single work in nearly six years, his friends and family began to worry that he had become restless, distracted and melancholy: states associated with "malignant musico-erotic fetish[es]" that "exert a hostile influence on [the artist's] whole existence" as "he gives way to a 'distracted condition of the mind.'"[495] Brahms's feelings for Clara indeed seem to have driven him to distraction, and he writes in 1854 that he feels "confused and indecisive," and that he has "to restrain [him]self forcibly just from quietly embracing her."[496] These sentiments perhaps shed new light on his letter from later that year in which he confesses: 'I often quarrel with myself – that is, Kreisler and Brahms quarrel with one another...both were quite confused, neither knew what he wanted.'

While Brahms's early Kreislerian tendencies are typically discussed in notational terms, his experience of turmoil and fragmentation at this time clearly references internal and physical states as well. The obsessive and moody nature of his letters is also reminiscent of assertions that monomania affects those 'endowed with a brilliant, warm and vivid imagination; [and] minds of a meditative and exclusive cast, which seem to be susceptible only of a series of thoughts and emotions.' Perhaps Kreisler here represents the lovesick poet who, 'buzzing wildly around in vague, endless spaces,' internally wishes to embrace Clara, while Brahms is the young composer who restrains himself externally out of near filial duty to her husband.

---

[495] Hoffman, "Automata," trans. Ewing in *The Best Tales of Hoffman,* 100 - 101, in Francesca Brittan, "Berlioz," 212.
[496] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5,* in Avins, *BLL*, 47 - 48.

Brahms's letters from around this time are also resplendent with traces of pure levity: from his incessant teasing of Clara's young children, to accounts of his love for long candlelit evenings of food, drink and music in the company of his closest friends, with Clara "dancing around the room for joy," and with "J[oachim] and Gr[imm] lying on the sofa at dusk, and [Brahms] playing in the next room." Remembering these blissful times, Brahms would later write, "How dear to me are all the works which came into being this winter…they remind me so much of twilight hours at Clara's."[497]

After Robert's death however, and Brahms's subsequent move away from Clara's home, the dissolution of his family in Hamburg, and the death of his long-suffering mother, Brahms's feelings of nostalgia and solitude do deepen. Having lost two family units in such quick succession, it is perhaps understandable why, in 1864 and 1872 respectively, he would write: "My real friends are the old friends…my heart can take pleasure in them more and more only in my imagination," and "holidays I always spend all alone...given that my own people are dead or far away."[498] Once aware of the potent emotional mixture each domestic situation represented however, it seems reasonable to again suggest that Brahms's sadness at being separated from many of those he loved, either through death or by circumstance, was not ruled by inert resignation but rather by a shifting, fleeting and fragmentary kind of nostalgia.

We have also seen that Brahms's feelings of alienation stem partly from his tendency for cruelty, meddling and jealousy. Indeed, throughout my discussion of the many professional and personal rifts for which he was partly if not primarily responsible, I asserted that any discussions of Brahmsian lateness that are inclusive of themes of

---

[497] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5 - 6 and Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe,* in Ibid., 49, 64 and 83.
[498] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, in Ibid., 293 - 94, 439.

alienation should also necessarily include the less controlled states of anger and callousness. Interestingly, the single-minded 'self-love, vanity, pride, and ambition' of Brahms's role in many of these rifts also seems reminiscent not only of contemporaneous medical discussions of those most susceptible to monomania, but to accusations levelled at the New Germans as well. We have also seen that Brahms was deeply affected by the mental and physical deteriorations of his closest friends: those like the surgeon Theodor Billroth for example, to whom Brahms writes in 1886, "It always sounds a bit melancholy when you write of feeling increasingly lonely. I have a sympathetic understanding for it, and wish you would be wary." Brahms's concern seems reflective of the polemics of his supporters, who warn that, "idleness and introspection are ruinous to health." When Billroth finally succumbs to illness in 1892, Brahms writes that he had "sensed that loss for years."[499]

A rift with Clara Schumann however, in addition to Brahms's hyperawareness of her frailty as perhaps evidenced by his *ossia* for the *Intermezzo in E Minor* Op. 116 no. 5, appears to have directly informed the composition of his late piano pieces Op. 116 - 119. I asserted that these pieces came into being at a time when the potential loss of his greatest ally and last living connection to his memories of her husband and their Düsseldorf home must have weighed heavily on his mind. I suggested that nostalgic reminiscences of those beautiful and tragic days of his youth were as much on Brahms's mind during the composition of his late piano works, as was his fear of losing Clara in his old age. As such, I argued that these pieces truly capture the dynamism of Brahmsian nostalgia, as they conjure past love and sadness, they anticipate future loss, and they also

[499] *Billroth - Brahms*, in Ibid., 639; Rogers, "Genius and Health," 518; Widmann, *Briefwechsel 8,* in Avins, *BLL*, 712 - 13.

served as a therapeutic elixir for the renewal of Brahms and Clara's friendship in the presentness of his old age. Brahms also seems not to have been immune to feminine charms in his old age, as letters between he, Elisabet von Herzogenberg, Hermine Spies and of course Clara are full of flirtation and jealousy. Perhaps these qualities too should be included in discussions of Brahmsian lateness.

Though Brahms is framed as having died in full control of his mental and physical apparatus, Clara's death in 1896 seems to have precipitated the advancement and conspicuousness of the terminal illness he had tried for so long to hide. While Brahms continued to consume copious amounts of food, wine and tobacco despite doctors' orders, as evidenced by Carl Friedberg's reminiscences and thereby refuting claims regarding his temperance in such matters, soon the mental and physical corrosion he had long stood by and watched in his close circle of friends was at his own doorstep. He complains of suffering from irritability, despondency and pain; while Friedberg's assertion that the composer's physical and mental distress is 'written in' to the fabric of his late piano works contests any notion of an earthly departure with Minerva's armour intact. Indeed, Straus's assertion that composers' late styles often represent non-normative bodies and minds is surely reflected in Friedberg's detailing of how the *Intermezzo* Op. 116 no. 5 captures Brahms's later corpulence, his overindulgence in his favourite vices, his waddle and shortness of breath, and his suicidal despair as he sought to escape a mind and body riddled with cancer.[500] I ultimately asserted that Brahms's designation of his late piano pieces as 'the lullabies of his sorrows' hints at a dynamic, shifting and restless brand of nostalgia in which the joyous and painful memories of friends, colleagues and places past

[500] DiClemente, "Brahms Performance Practice," 59 - 60, from Transcript 368 - 70.

comforted him in the presentness of an old age characterized by the mental and physical deterioration of both himself and those he loved.

While unfolding, fragmentary and fleeting qualities of sadness, alienation and nostalgia indeed fleck Brahms's letters, so too are these letters evidentiary of the less controlled mental and physical states of anger, callousness, irritability, confusion, coyness, obsession, fantasy, moodiness, levity, bliss, despondency, melancholy, jealousy, vanity, pride, despair, disease, pain, overindulgence, and death. As such, I argued that discussions of lateness in Brahms that reinforce notions of the soundness of his physical and mental apparatus are pre-structured by an aesthetic ideology of control. Furthermore, while discussions of Brahms's trajectory away from his early Schumannistic tendencies and towards the coherence of his later style seem predicated on notational categories and agenda-laden accounts of his life and work, Brahms's letters clearly evidence him to have continued to experience unresolved inner and outer states until his death. All of this seems to again point to the conclusion that Brahms wasn't nearly as far removed from his Romantic context as Brahmsians past and present like to believe.

As emphasized throughout this volume, at the junction of the minds and bodies of musicians lies the act of performance. Unfortunately however, the aesthetic ideology of control is shown to have pre-structured modern assessments of evidence of Brahms's performative contexts in the third chapter of this volume entitled, "The Playing Styles of the Schumann-Brahms Pianists." Expanding on Susan Sontag's assertion that distinctions between style and content "hol[d] together the fabric of critical discourse and serv[e] to perpetuate certain intellectual aims and vested interests,"[501] I argued that by regarding evidence of Brahms's performance contexts that reinforces the aesthetic ideology of

[501] Sontag, “On Style,” http://www.coldbacon.com/writing/sontag-onstyle.html.

control as content, while as else is viewed as superficial and thus disposable style, modern Brahmsians have avoided the awkward conclusion that according to modern Brahms performance norms, Brahms would today be considered an *un*Brahmsian pianist.

In order to examine how dissections of Brahms's musical contexts have been pre-structured by the 'aims and vested interests' of the aesthetic ideology of control, I demonstrated how notions of a unified Schumann-Brahms school of pianism have been built around highly palatable descriptions of Clara Schumann's hyper-controlled performance ideology. Indeed, as Michael Musgrave asserts, "Clara was so intimate with the compositions of Brahms and his artistic values...[and] though speaking in the first place of playing Schumann's music, [her] remarks have equal relevance to Brahms."[502] As Clara was keenly aware of the links between performance style and composer identity, and given her tireless championing of Brahms, it is no wonder that descriptions of her performance ideology are laden with the language of mental and physical control.

As we have seen, contemporaneous discussions of Clara's approach included assertions of her literalism, as evidenced by her urging of pupils to “play what is written, play it *as* it is written…it all stands there”; and her distaste for sentimentality, affectation, melodrama, virtuosity and especially "rush and hurry,"[503] as evidenced by her admonition 'keine Passagen.' She is also reported to have underlined the importance of carefully delineating the tonal, rhythmic and textural details of works, though never to the detriment of the whole, as demonstrated by her emphasis of 'Das Getragene'; and the cultivation of a singing, connected and covered tone and attack through inner and outer poise, as evidenced by her emphasis on 'hineinlegen.’ While Clara's approach seems to

[502] Musgrave, "Early Trends," in *Performing Brahms,* 316.
[503] Davies, “On Schumann,” 215, 216.

have included temporal elasticity, arpeggiation and dislocation, in the context of her performance ideology most modern observers tend to assume that their use was similarly restrained and functioned to elucidate musical detail and structure.

I then discussed how modern distillations of the content of Brahms's performance style tend to select for evidence that aligns his approach with that of Clara's. Musgrave for example summarizes Brahms's described performance style as having been characterized by a distinctive rhythm and attack, the quality and variety of his tone, and his awareness of the importance of tempo as related to interpretation and spirit.[504] Based on other contemporaneous accounts detailed throughout *Performing Brahms* and *A Brahms Reader* however, to this framework I added a covered and singing legato tone and powerful basses; the fastidious delineation of rhythmic and textural detail, though not to the detriment of the whole; an approach to expressive tempo modifications ruled by the holding back of tempo; and the regimented use of unnotated expressive devices in order to delineate musical detail and structure. When Brahms is reported to have fallen short of this Clara 'ideal,' I asserted that it is almost always framed today as a function of his transition from a youthful pianist who performed other composers' works to an aged composer whose works were performed by others.

Narratives concerning the exaggerations and wrong notes of Brahms's deteriorated later style and the impression that his performances were akin to a kind of "spirited sketch" become particularly pertinent in light of his 1889 cylinder recording. Musgrave, Neal Peres Da Costa and George S. Bozarth connect many of Brahms's textual departures, rhythmic alterations and tempo modifications to "descriptions of his *best* qualities...in relation to the *score*." Those elements of Brahms's recorded style that are

[504] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 302.

less supported by Clara-centric descriptions of his playing or that are irreducible to notational categories are either ignored as evidence of ageing and lack of practice, or dismissed as a "hasty if enthusiastic response to the recording medium."[505] I also observed how caution seems to pervade assessments of the flexibility and abandon of Brahms's recorded style, as evidenced by Musgrave's questioning of "how free is free and how strict is strict - and in what kinds of pieces," and Da Costa's assertion that, "the boundaries within which this flexibility took place remain relatively unclear."[506] I argued that Brahms's recording *does* evidence boundaries, and that the extent to which we take him at his word tends to be related to our investment in notions of Brahmsian control.

Assessments of the described and recorded performance styles of the pupils that Clara Schumann and Brahms shared unfold along similar lines, with the approaches of those reported to have embodied Clara's teachings like Fanny Davies and Adelina De Lara for example, being understood today as historically authoritative with regards to the performance of Brahms's piano music. Musgrave for example praises De Lara's literalism, her careful tonal delineation of details, and her holding back of tempo for emphasis, while no mention is made of her tendency to rush. As we have seen, Musgrave also invokes the trope of ageing minds and bodies when he asserts that De Lara's recordings have historical authority "despite her obvious limitations of technique and occasionally memory of reading."[507] As in the case of Brahms's recording, emphasizing De Lara's age at the time of recording implies that those elements of her approach that are less reducible to Clara-centric notions of control are disposable.

---

[505] E. Schumann, *Erinnerungen,* 269, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 125; Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 323, 305. Emphasis mine.
[506] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 323; Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 264 - 65.
[507] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 314 - 15

Other pupils like Nathalie Janotha, Leonard Borwick and Carl Friedberg for example, seem to have generally adhered to principles of Clara's teachings, while at times exhibiting episodes of "waywardness and displays of strength"[508] related to the presence of live audiences or the specific notational features of musical works. As such, their historical Brahmsian authority is also generally uncontested. Evidence of Ilona Eibenschütz's performance style on the other hand, posits her as furthest from the Clara 'ideal.' Clara wildly disapproved of both Eibenschütz's playing and Brahms's enthusiasm for it, and in his comparison of Eibenschütz's recordings to his Clara-based summary of the essential elements of Brahms's style, Musgrave asserts that her playing lacks authority because of its paucity of contrasts of tone and touch; because she is negligent of detail and structure; and because her playing is not governed by the practice of holding for emphasis. Surely aware of the correlation between Eibenschütz's and Brahms's recorded performance styles, Musgrave suggest that, "such is the extent of the distortion here that one senses that it must have been influenced largely by what she heard from Brahms."[509] What Eibenschütz heard from Brahms of course, were his deteriorated later 'sketches.'

I however argued that many features of Brahms's performance style that are today dismissed as evidence of an ageing mind and body had always been a part of his performance style, and that his "style of playing differed *in toto* from Frau Schumann's." Indeed, observers note as early as the 1850s that he "does not play like a consummately trained, highly intelligent musician."[510] Those who heard him play later in life seem to have assumed that he had once been a virtuoso based on agenda-laden descriptions of his

---

[508] Shaw, I, 639, in Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music,* chapter 6, paragraph 11.
[509] Ibid., 324.
[510] May, *Johannes Brahms*, II: 211 - 12, in Philip, *Performing Brahms*, 368; Hübbe, *Brahms in Hamburg*, II, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 122, 125.

earlier performance style, like those with which Robert Schumann launched the young composer's career for example. While Clara was intensely aware of the role of performers in canonic identity-making, Brahms seems to have espoused a much more carefree approach to performance, playing with the "radiant serenity of a mind happy in the exercise of his art," as he "pound[ed] away somewhere near the right notes."[511]

In descriptions often passed over in favour of those evidencing control, Brahms is reported to have often hastily reduced musical figures and to have played with gusto and freedom, as if he was half drunk or just improvising. Contemporaneous impressions of Brahms's performances also imply a Kreislerian kaleidoscope of less controlled mental and physical states reminiscent of those evidenced by his letters; including poetic dreaminess and demoniac passion, wild fantastic flights and wayward humour, and shadowy flitting and breathless agitation. Based on the presence of these qualities in descriptions and recordings of Brahms's and Eibenschütz's playing styles, I argued that the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists was not unified around a Clara-centric ideal, but rather that these performers represented a spectrum of approaches; that the performance styles of those furthest from the Clara ideal cannot be entirely explained by the trope of mental and physical deterioration; and that these outlying approaches may tell us more about how Brahms actually played.

Indeed, those pianists in the Schumann-Brahms circle whose performance styles were furthest from the Clara ideal seem to have espoused an approach to performance ruled by a desire to communicate the *spirit* of their 'spirited sketches,' with a view of their minds and bodies as more than disappearing agents in the transmission of

---

[511] Widmann, *Johannes Brahms,* 17 - 18, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 123; Fromm, "Some Reminiscences," 615.

composers' works and identities. I argued that by dismissing the less controlled elements of their styles as circumstantial or spurious, one effectively eliminates just about everything that distances their version of Brahms from our own. This further suggests that many of these stylistic elements were in fact essential content where Brahms's performance style is concerned.

Expanding on William Brook's discussion of Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's theory of experimental systems therefore, I suggested that in order for the recordings of the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists to reveal their secrets about modern performer-scholars' investment in the aesthetic ideology of control, these traces need to be handled with a view to creating "not new artefacts but new questions, not new histories but new communities...precisely to assert that the job is *not* done...[and] that the questions they ask outlast the answers they seem to supply."[512] In the fourth chapter entitled, "Analyses of the Schumann-Brahms Pupil Recordings," I began by discussing the concrete ways in which modern Brahms style plays out in Brahms's *Rhapsody in G Minor* Op. 79 no. 2, *Intermezzo in E flat Major* Op. 117 no. 1, *Ballade in G Minor* Op. 118 no. 3 and *Intermezzo in E Minor* Op. 119 no. 2: the same works recorded by Adelina de Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz. By examining representative modern recordings it was revealed that regardless of the nature of the work in question, each performance surveyed was literal, detailed, structural, temporally and tonally measured, and expressively and technically controlled.

Literal and detailed playing was shown to entail giving all notes and rests their full value; playing materials simultaneously when notated vertically; never adding,

[512] Brooks, "Historical Precedents," adapted from Schwab ed., *Experimental Systems,* in *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology*, 195.

subtracting or altering musical materials; reacting to every instance of notation with some appropriate action; and limiting departures from the score to those that highlight detail and structure. Structural playing involves rendering parallel indications similarly or in ways staggered to elucidate structure; shaping local details according to their structural weight; maintaining temporal and tonal consistency within sections and creating contrast between them; and defining the outer edges of structures through the holding back of tempo. Performances are temporally measured when they afford enough time to elucidate local details though not so much so as to subvert structure; when they avoid rushing and rhythmic alterations; when the unnotated taking of time is used to clarify structure; and when an underlying sense of the pulse and divisions of the measure are clear. Performances are expressively and technically controlled when lyrical passages sound introspective as opposed to sentimental, and when difficult passages sound resolute as opposed to flashy and harsh; when pianists play with a deeply connected approach to tone and attack; and when bass and soprano lines ring out clearly. For all of these reasons, the modern performances surveyed were shown to communicate a serious and portentous version of Brahms that reflects current understandings of his canonic identity.

In order to truly "criticize the frame around the discipline, the mental enclosure that pre-structures and limits the field by restricting the questions that are asked,"[513] I proposed an approach to Adelina de Lara's and Ilona Eibenschütz's Brahms recordings whereby these sounding traces would be analysed and copied with the same reverence lavished upon documentary sources. I asserted that this single-minded approach was not intended to preserve or even to recreate these women's performances, but rather to make their styles part of my own mental and physical apparatus as a pianist today. Tropes of

[513] Korsyn, "Brahms Research," 91.

caution, inspiration and authentication would be sidestepped in favour of an approach whereby early-recorded sounds are taken at face value: anything that was audible, either with the 'naked ear' or with the help of visualisation software, would be described and copied without judgement. As expected, at the end of the analysis and style copying phase it was revealed that the differences between early-recorded and modern Brahms style lie not in superficial mannerisms and eccentricities, but rather in fundamental tensions as related to the pillars of modern Brahms performance norms: mores that are both buttressed by the aesthetic ideology of control and understood as historically sound.

Adelina de Lara's approach for example is far from what is considered literal and detailed today; with arpeggiation and dislocation being used almost everywhere, and with the latter occurring more frequently at the slower outer edges of musical structures and with the former used more frequently over their faster middles. De Lara's arpeggiations and dislocations also lead to localized asynchronicity between the hands and the overlapping of discretely notated materials. Elsewhere, she doubles, adds and removes notes for effect, emphasis or voicing; she plays tied notes again for extra resonance; she cuts slurs, note and rest values, and *fermati* when rushing; she often plays inner lines more prominently than soprano lines; she rushes over *crescendi*; she often ignores indications to reduce temporal and tonal intensity in lyrical materials, resulting in reduced contrast between subjects and sections; and she sometimes overemphasizes local details resulting in the undercutting of rhythmic and structural clarity.

So too is De Lara's approach to structure very different from our own, as she uses both rushing and slowing to unify and delineate phrase groups and sections, while often softening the boundaries between these structures by rushing, eliding, shortening the

values of notes and *fermati*, and by ignoring indications to modify tonal and temporal intensity. While she does contrast larger sections from one another, she doesn't necessarily maintain consistency of time and tone within them, and she often shapes reoccurring materials differently and in ways that do not elucidate overall structure. She does however sometimes achieve structural contrast by shifting between an 'outer' or more vertical approach to tone and attack in slower passages, and an 'inner' or more horizontal approach in faster one. Her approach does not read as temporally controlled to modern ears either, as her tempo often accumulates from phrase to phrase, while her rhythmic alterations can blur a clear sense of the pulse and the divisions of the measure.

In sum, I found that playing like Adelina De Lara does not sound or feel either expressively or technically controlled today due to her treatment of detail, tone, time and structure. This should give those who would conflate Clara Schumann's pianism with Brahms's serious pause, given that De Lara is reported to have staunchly "maintained and professed the Clara Schumann method."[514] As we have seen, by emphasizing the similarities between De Lara's playing style and descriptions of Clara's, while dismissing her technical missteps and the lopsided and subtly breathless quality of her approach as evidence of a deteriorated mind and body, De Lara's Brahmsian historical authority continues to remain intact. By imitating her playing style however, I found that these less controlled qualities result from her highly consistent tendency to rush slightly over most phrases; her use of rhythmic alteration, dislocation and arpeggiation; her softening of structural boundaries; her use of a more vertical tone and attack in lyrical passages and a more horizontal one in faster passages; and her weighting of the hands and ears inwards when rolling or voicing materials. I asserted that because these less controlled elements

[514] "Madame Adelina de Lara," *The Guardian*, 2.

form the content of De Lara's approach, they would have to be applied with the same frequency and to the same degree if modern RIP pianists hope to capture the spirit of her Brahms recordings. In other words, even if one chooses to replicate the performance styles of those pianists closest to the controlled Clara ideal, it is vital to acknowledge and experience how that control actually feels, sounds, and signifies today.

At the extreme opposite end of the spectrum of approaches represented by the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists however, one finds Ilona Eibenschütz. Rather than arpeggiating and dislocating almost everywhere, she instead tends to use these devices while rushing through, eliding and truncating musical materials at the boundaries of musical structures. While De Lara's dislocations and arpeggiations often result in a local disjointing of the hands, Eibenschütz's result in large amounts of material becoming overlapped where otherwise notated discretely. Elsewhere, she also doubles, adds and alters notes much more freely than De Lara, she plays tied notes again, and she rewrites or omits vast sections of material. Like De Lara though to a much more extreme degree, Eibenschütz ignores *fermati* when rushing or where blurring structural boundaries, she bypasses indications to reduce temporal or tonal intensity in lyrical materials, and she alters the values of notes and rests almost everywhere. While Eibenschütz generally has little time to shape local complexities of due to the briskness and precipitousness of her tempi, when she does relent in order to do so these instances assume near structural significance.

Eibenschütz also shapes all structures large and small with an approach to tempo modification that is primarily defined by rushing. When the outer edges of these structures are not blurred through combinations of arpeggiation, rhythmic alteration,

truncation and elision, she tends to take time before or after rather than at the structural boundary itself. This subversion of structure is often further compounded by her tendency to render the preparatory and subsequent measures of structural boundaries in rhythmically- and harmonically-ambiguous ways. Elsewhere, while there is rarely much contrast between sections in her playing, there tends to be a high amount of consistency within up-tempo sections and much less consistency within more lyrical ones. Like De Lara however, Eibenschütz does achieve some structural contrast by alternating between an 'outer' and 'inner' approach to tone and attack. As related to temporal matters, like De Lara but again in more extreme ways, Eibenschütz's tempo tends to accumulate from phrase to phrase; she lengthens and shortens notes while sounding others early or late, thereby obscuring rhythmic regularity; and she ignores most *fermati*, indications to slow, and the values of notes and rests. Unlike De Lara, Eibenschütz's tempo almost never settles anywhere and rarely affords the time and space to shape local details; her truncation and elision of musical material happens beyond logical divisions of the measure, thereby subverting any sense of underlying pulse; and she not only ignores indications to slow in lyrical passages but often uses those passages in order to further increase tempo over entire sections and even works.

Given the strictures of modern Brahms style and its underlying aesthetic ideology of control, it is no wonder that Ilona Eibenschütz's Brahms style continues to struggle to claim even a modicum of the historical authority conferred upon De Lara's. She simply does not 'play' detail and structure in the hyper-controlled ways we've come to expect based on agenda-laden accounts of the composer's musical contexts and on conflations between his pianism and that of Clara Schumann. Nothing about Eibenschütz's approach

communicates Brahms's hale and hearty Classical identity; making his enthusiasm for her playing all the more difficult for many to bear, and leading to accusations of earthly weakness on his part (one of the only weaknesses he is afforded) and opportunism on hers. Indeed, in Eibenschütz's playing local details are transformed from organs into interstitial fluid, the skeletal boundaries of musical structures become fully permeable membranes, and tempo perpetually threatens to dismember the mental and physical apparatus instead of functioning as a life-giving, ordering and stabilising pulse.

I argued however that the consistency and facility of Eibenschütz's approach, despite the fifty-year chasm between the two recordings surveyed here, suggests that she was simply uninterested in using detail, tone, time and structure to communicate control. Given Brahms's admiration of her approach to his piano works, it is her consistency and facility that perhaps pose the greatest threat to the aesthetic ideology of control and the canonic identity it protects: one cannot simply select for those elements in Eibenschütz's style that reinforce modern notions of Brahmsian control while dismissing others as evidence of a deteriorated mind and body. Her Brahms style is what it is from start to finish, and it is time for it to be recognized as not only historically authoritative, but much closer in spirit to Brahms's own pianism than that "of the more timidly and wrongly reverential school"[515] as well. Indeed, to borrow from Bruce Haynes, Eibenschütz's style is authentic because, quite simply, it is the real thing.[516]

Having learned Adelina De Lara's and Ilona Eibenschütz's Brahmsian dialects from the inside-out, it was then time to apply their styles experimentally in works for which I had no sounding model. In the fifth and final chapter entitled "Experimenting

---

[515] "The Magazines," *Academy and Literature* 84, no. 2128 (February 15, 1913): 211.
[516] Haynes, *The End of Early Music,* 10.

with the Recordings of the Schumann-Brahms Pupils," I adopted an approach inspired by Robert Philip's assertion that learning to slide like Romantic violinists might mean sliding almost everywhere while abandoning the notion that clean playing is tasteful playing, and Mary Hunter's discussion of how nineteenth-century expressive embellishments were first learned as 'riffs' abstracted from musical works then later applied "as the spirit moved the performer, and not necessarily at predetermined places in any given piece."[517] I thus set out to liberally insert elements of each pianist's approach, allowing those elements to unravel Brahmsian sound, score, and identity in works that were strikingly different to their early-recorded models.

In the case of the *Intermezzo in E Major* Op. 116 no. 4, having identified modern performances of this work as being characterized by a resignedly nostalgic quality, I looked to recreate the dynamism evidenced both by my early-recorded models, and by my investigations into Brahmsian nostalgia and lateness as well. I did this by lengthening triplet upbeats while rushing between them; by allowing tempo to accumulate from phrase to phrase; by shortening and lengthening note and rest values as needed; by encouraging an extreme independence of the hands; by allowing materials that are notated discretely to overlap; by blurring the outer edges of phrase groups and sections and ignoring indications to slow or reduce tonal intensity; and by overemphasizing some complexities while glossing over others. I focused on these tendencies not only because they are essential elements of both De Lara's and Eibenschütz's styles, but also because they cannot be applied in pointillistic ways. Indeed, while I also arpeggiate and dislocate almost everywhere, if I did so while otherwise controlling detail, time and structure, I would not be allowing these devices to 'infect' and unfurl my performance in quite the

[517] Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style*, 235; Hunter, "To Play as if from the Soul," 391.

same ways evidenced by the historical sounding evidence. Despite having had a general idea of what I was going to do once I arrived in the recording studio, the results of this initial 'experiment' were still startling.

In my performance of this work as heard in Sound Ex. 5.2.1b, one hears how in the A section time indeed becomes suspended at triplet upbeats before swinging into and through the material that follows, causing tempo to accumulate. The ever-earlier falling right-hand figures of the opening seven measures that can sound so wistful in modern performances assume an impatient quality, while the rising left-hand figures tend to dominate and propel what otherwise tends to be a contemplative back and forth dialogue between the hands. As I rush further, this "certain intensity, verging sometimes on impatience" then begins to unravel the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic complexities of Brahms's notation, and while heading into the climax of the section I sense the "capricious shifting of meters and textures…suggest[ing] the allusive and episodic nature of a recounted story"[518] of both Brahms's early Kreislerian notational practices, and his lifelong experience of inner and outer turmoil.

Far from the floating anticipatory quality one hears today, the transitional material between the A and B sections continues to plead and shout, and I indeed feel as though I am "buzzing wildly around in vague, endless spaces" as I rush to the snarling chordal material in which one hears the ageing composer who muses, "I may already have lost what scant reputation I had as a "kind and obliging person."[519] With the extrovertedly arpeggiated right-hand chords of the B section however, I was inspired by the levity and

[518] "Borwick," *The Musical Times* (October 1, 1925): 942 - 43; Bellman, "*Aus alten Märchen*," 117 - 35, in Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 263.
[519] Hoffman, *Kater Murr*, 216, in Kross, "Brahms," 199; Von Balassa, *Brahmsfreundin*, in Avins, *BLL*, 426.

passions of Brahms's "glorious, jolly day[s]…making music, drinking [and] reading" at Clara Schumann's Düsseldorf home, with the lady "dancing around the room for joy"[520] while he played games with her rambunctious children. When this material briefly returns at the end of the work however, I now hear echoes of Brahms's reminiscences of the more intimate "twilight hours at Clara's," and the qualities of light and shadow, nearness and remoteness, and domesticity and fraternal bliss, implied by scenes like that of "J[oachim] and Gr[imm] lying on the sofa at dusk, and [Brahms] playing in the next room."[521] Thus while there are indeed nostalgic qualities in my performance of this work, like Brahms's memories of his poetic and tragic youth they are shifting, restless, fragmentary, impassioned and unfolding. I also sought to capture those other less controlled qualities of Brahmsian lateness, including the composer's propensity for irritability, moodiness and jealousy, and his continued affinity for the inner and outer torment of love and loss.

In my experiments with the *Intermezzo in E Minor* Op. 116 no. 5, based on Brahms's reference to the "peculiar appeal which is always connected with a difficulty,"[522] and both the awkward *pas de pouces* written into its fabric and Carl Friedberg's assertion of its depiction of the composer's later despair and disease, I sought to create a performance that captured my hypothesis that unsound states of body and mind lie at the heart of what this work 'tells of.' As such, in the A sections of this work as demonstrated in Sound Ex. 5.2.2b, I applied tonal and temporal emphasis where the thumbs are forced to overlap; and I imitated De Lara's and Eibenschütz's tendencies to shape musical materials by rushing towards their middles, thereby rendering the awkward

[520] Grimm, *Briefwechsel 4,* and Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5 - 6,* in Avins, *BLL*, 102, 49.
[521] Joachim, *Briefwechsel 5 - 6,* and *Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe,* in Ibid., 83, 64.
[522] *Clara Schumann: ein Künstlerleben*, III: 562 - 63, in Ibid., 698.

leaps and thumb-crossings of the sections' middle measures all the more treacherous. These perils were then compounded by my imitation of De Lara's use of dislocation over the slower outer measures of phrase groups and arpeggiation over their faster middles: devices that force the hand to release where it would otherwise linger in slower material, and linger where it would normally release in faster material.

To my ears, the tonal instability of the dislocations in the slower outer measures of the A sections of this work result in an eerily stilted, searching and questioning quality that conjures the "fragmentary, bizarre character" of Kreisler's internal states in *Kater Murr*, and Brahms's youthful experience of that internal quarrel between himself and Kreisler, where "both were quite confused, neither knew what he wanted."[523] Over the faster middle measures of the A sections on the other hand, arpeggiation further undercuts tonal and temporal predictability while significantly increasing one's feeling of technical fallibility; thereby translating into an aesthetic experience reminiscent of Kreisler's "fixed notion that insanity was lurking near him, like a wild beast thirsting for its prey, and that it would sometime suddenly tear him to pieces."[524]

Throughout, one also hears Friedberg's allusion to the "despair and snatching for air and for freedom" as Brahms tries to escape the "horrible shell which begins through cancer to decline." Indeed, far from being a respite from the internal and external peril of the A sections, the middle section of this work is again resplendent with dislocation and extreme tempo modification; making the wide left-hand leaps over its faster middle all the more fraught with danger. As these leaps become wider, as tempo increases, and as the upper right-hand melody notes ascend while heading towards the section's climax, I

[523] Hoffman, *Kater Murr*, 233, in Kross, "Brahms," 199; *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, I, 9, in Avins, *BLL*, 51.
[524] Hoffman, *Kater Murr*, 114, 133, in Kross, "Brahms," 197.

recall Friedberg's depiction of how Brahms "tried to break the chains and get rid of himself," and how when "he consoles himself after the excitement," one hears "no, no, no, keep quiet, also in gasps."[525] While modern pianists struggle to maintain control in this work, hoping that its ineffable qualities will emerge on their own, by encouraging the unravelling of my own mind and body I tried to capture another facet of Brahmsian lateness: that of "impaired bodies or minds and their failure to function in a normal way."[526]

Finally, in my experiments with the *Intermezzo in B Minor* Op. 119 no. 1 as heard in Sound Ex. 5.2.3b, I drew inspiration from the most extreme stylistic elements of that most 'unBrahmsian' of pianists, Ilona Eibenschütz. By dislocating throughout the A sections and in ways reminiscent of reports of Brahms's tendency to always play with the hands apart, I was able to achieve an independence of the hands whereby the upper right-hand melodic line floats freely over that of the left, lending it an impressionistic quality of "deep feeling and poetic dreaminess" that recalls Satie rather than Beethoven. My tendency to rush over each phrase group, and to take time after the next phrase has already begun before again allowing tempo to accumulate, begins to disintegrate the internal structure of this section and conjures Clara's assertion that she doesn't think "Ilona understands the pieces as they need to be understood" because "she goes too quickly over everything."[527]

My 'swinging' of sixteenth notes at the opening of the B section was intended to recall reports that Brahms "was simple as a child, and played games," and observations of

---

[525] DiClemente, "Brahms Performance Practice," 59 - 60, from Transcript 368 - 70.
[526] Straus, "Disability," 12.
[527] Ophüls, *Erinnerungen,* 19 (123), in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 123; *Clara Schumann - Brahms Briefe* II: 540 - 42, in Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 316.

a “a jazz-like nonchalance" in Eibenschütz’s approach. As I begin to rush towards the first climax of the section however, my dislocations and the resulting disjointing of the hands seem to mimic the latter's "high-strung intensity that pushes relentlessly,” and reports of the “undercurrent of breathless agitation” in the playing of the former.[528] While rushing towards the final climax of the section, by imitating Eibenschütz’s tendency to truncate and elide materials I succeed in obscuring the pulse and divisions of the measures, while initiating a great sweep of tone and time that is carried right through the end of the B section and into the reprise of the A. This tonal and temporal flourish, and its resulting feeling of emotional and technical eruption, sounds to my ears like accounts of how in the climaxes of Brahms’s music “ran the undertone of subterranean rumbling like the echo of a remote earthquake... remind[ing] listeners that beneath the heavy boulders of classic form the romanticism of Brahms's youth was buried."[529] This carefree extroversion however, is just one of the qualities I had long sensed was being suppressed by the mores of modern Brahms style: norms that demand the careful elucidation of the detail and outline of these ‘heavy boulders’ above all else.

Indeed, by imitating the more extreme facets of Ilona Eibenschütz’s early-recorded Brahms style, my approach to this work highlights tensions of sound and score that have been explored throughout this volume. The clear-eyed notational coherence of this work is nowhere to be found in my a-literal, and tonally, temporally, expressively and technically *un*controlled playing of its detail and structure. While I’m not consciously negating detail and structure *per se*, what I am doing (and what I suspect Eibenschütz was doing as well) is using these notational features as a means to some other end. Though it

[528] Fromm, "Some Reminiscences," 615; Evans, *Behind the Notes*, 26; Davies, "Some Personal Recollections," 182 - 84, in Bozarth, *Performing Brahms*, 174.
[529] Graf, *Legend of a Musical City*, 105, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 134.

is admittedly disconcerting to face Brahms's scores with the intention of playing something other than their detail and structure, if the 'sketches' of those pianists furthest from the Clara ideal indeed sought to capture the spirit rather than the letter of the work being performed, then perhaps for nascent RIP pianists this 'something other' can be the impression left by their recordings. In truth, it was ultimately the spirit of De Lara's and Eibenschütz's recordings that informed how the elements of their approaches came together in my experiments, and not the notational features of Brahms's hale and hearty scores. The daunting freedom and responsibility of being moved by restless Romantic spirits rather than by the cool logic of Classical notation perhaps recalls Kreisler's lament in Hoffman's *In Callots Manier*:

> I so assiduously searched out at the piano melodies and chords, which often had much expression and coherence. But I often wanted to weep bitterly…for whenever I touched the keyboard...unknown songs that I had never heard before flowed through my soul, and they seemed to me not my father's song, but rather those songs which sounded around me like ghostly voices.[530]

My final conclusions are therefore that despite their often tacit subscription to ethical principles as related to the historical validity of modern Brahms performance norms, modern pianists' performances remain worlds apart from the composer's. These gaps between what pianists believe, know and do are occupied by a pervasive aesthetic ideology of control that underlies relativist understandings of Brahms's Classicist canonic identity as compared to those of his Romantic contemporaries. This ideology arose out of nineteenth-century cultural, political, philosophical, religious, nationalistic and even

[530] Hoffman, "Johannes Kreislers Lehrbrief," *In Callots Manier*, I, 274, in Kross, "Brahms," 196.

medical polemics in which Brahms's controlled mental and physical apparatus was posited as Classical; while the excesses, weaknesses, diseases and insanities of those like Wagner, Berlioz, Liszt and Schumann were seen as quintessentially Romantic. These dialectics pervade the historical documentary record, thereby reaffirming the historical validity of an aesthetic ideology that continues to mediate scholarly and performative spheres: with historical evidence that does not reinforce notions of Brahms's controlled Classicist identity being dismissed or ignored; and with literal, detailed, structural, and temporally-, tonally-, expressively- and technically-restrained performances being understood to result in a style that reflects Brahms's intentions.

When evidence of Brahms's musical contexts is reappraised with the intention of problematizing rather than buttressing the aesthetic ideology of control however, Brahms's letters reveal him to have experienced unstable mental and physical states that bear a striking resemblance to those associated with his contemporaries; descriptions of Brahms's performance style and those of the pianists in his inner circle evidence an approach inclusive of the inhibitions and fallibilities typically associated with Romantic pianism; analyses of these pianists' recordings reveal their use of expressive and technical resources that also signify as Romantic, especially as related to what can sound to modern ears like their negligence of detail and structure; and experimentation with these resources results in an approach that is as reflective of Brahms's musical context in its entirety as it is closer to a style typically posited as Romantic. Because this shift in Brahmsian sound, score and identity proposes a rethink of what it is pianists are ethically bound to do when playing Brahms's music, once armed with this knowledge their acts will speak volumes about just how historically-informed they are prepared to be.

This kind of identity work therefore is not only centred around Brahms, but the identities of the pianists who play his music as well. Indeed, performances informed by the early recordings of the Schumann-Brahms pianists raise serious questions regarding how we judge parameters like competence. My recorded style experiments for example, are not perfect by the standards to which I typically hold myself when heading into the studio. This is because their manipulations of tone and time tend to unfurl sound and score in ways that resist my habits of control, so rather than being able to carefully rehearse how a succession of rushed and arpeggiated chords will go, I instead find myself merely hoping for the best. Like many of the early recordings surveyed in this volume, even when things go ‘well’ a performance can still sound messy and ill rehearsed by modern standards. Throughout the recording process I was thus painfully aware of the pressures of making a polished ‘product’ while inhabiting such a seemingly imperfect performance style: when looking to correct a wrong note for example, the recording engineer and I found that no two takes were nearly similar enough for even the most basic of editing practices, and were forced to abandon the notion altogether as a result. Indeed, it is the resistance of this style to being fixed that makes even my style copies sound unlike their models. As such, it is imperative that modern RIP Brahms style, live or recorded, be judged along similar lines as early-recorded Brahms style: as one that is quintessentially 'live,' casual, unpredictable and very nearly improvisatory.

Tensions between RIP style and modern expectations of competence also come into play in advanced artistic research spheres where, in the context of conferences for example, performers face pressures to perform in ways widely perceived as competent while demonstrating and disseminating their research outcomes, thereby confirming their

authority as both expert performers and scholars. I have seen these pressures stifle the experimental and thus epistemic value of many promising artistic research projects, with performer-scholars being quite happy to deconstruct tacit ways of knowing and doing in very old or very recent repertoires, while choosing to perform in mainstream ways in research that focuses on standard repertoires with narrowly-defined performance norms. When presenting my own artistic research however, I have found it therapeutic (both for myself and for audiences) to point out how the imperfections of RIP Brahms style are themselves research outcomes, and that our reactions to them tend to prove my point regarding the pervasiveness of the Brahmsian aesthetic ideology of control.

In conservatories on the other hand, while modern performance norms continue to be reinforced in the judging of final recitals, I have recently witnessed a heartening expansion in the judging of competence as related to the performance of standard repertoires. Within the context of my own MMus students' artistic research projects for example, I see the seeds of a promising view of both performance style and composer identity as malleable and context-specific. These young performers are able to achieve perfection within very narrow definitions of mastery as imposed by their teachers, while experimenting openly and freely with style and identity within the context of their research. I have yet to encounter a student where what was stylistically inhabited and embodied in the latter context didn't seep into the former, with positive results. Indeed, when asking young pianists to rush over Brahms's *crescendi* in masterclasses for example, shyness turns to awe when I present them with historical evidence confirming those practices in Brahms's own playing. After having tried it out, many later report that even when playing according to the precepts of modern Brahms style, they feel the

residual traces of having once rushed: a tension that cannot be unfelt, and one that further underlines the importance of these students' access to experimental spaces.

Audiences too are faced with the malleability of Brahmsian identity and its associated performance norms when performers begin to assert themselves creatively, and in ways that Brahms would have expected. Suddenly, performer, audience, work and composer are thrown into a new relationship whose ground rules must be worked out in real-time. Imagine going to an all-Brahms piano recital and not knowing what to expect. This thesis thus also illustrates the importance of including extreme pieces of historical evidence when provoking issues of composer identity and performance style in public, as only those traces that shake performers' and audiences' belief systems to their core seem to have the power to reveal our unseen and unspoken ways of doing, thinking, listening and judging: ways that, once elucidated, can then be further problematized.

This thesis indeed raises a number of issues that would benefit from further research. When faced with evidence that Brahms didn't expect pianists to play detail and structure in the ways dictated by modern Brahms performance norms, what then are we supposed to do in performances of his piano music? To answer this question it could be illuminating to examine pedagogical texts like those one might have found in nineteenth-century conservatories with a view to uncovering what piano teachers and examination boards thought was essential to the performance of Brahms's piano music. Given Brahms's extensive revisionist practices, while it doesn't seem particularly necessary to go back to his earlier piano works in order to elucidate some 'early' style of performance as opposed to the 'late' one discussed throughout this volume, these earlier works nonetheless warrant the same style copying and experimentation carried out here. And

while I have already begun to test this RIP Brahms style in lied and chamber music settings, this too is an area for further work, especially as related to how singers, wind players and string players manage things like breath and bow control and note placement when dealing with pianists who are rushing, truncating and eliding materials. While it is possible that the Schumann-Brahms pianists curbed these tendencies in ensemble situations, imitating their chamber and lied recordings would certainly elucidate the rehearsal strategies, aural and visual cues, and power relationships involved in ensemble RIP Brahms style.

While I kept the number of recordings analysed and copied here extremely small in order to avoid the generalizations and thus omissions of outlying performance approaches that can come from establishing general trends, it would be helpful to continue this work for the rest of the pianists in the Schumann-Brahms circle: from many of those briefly examined here, like Nathalie Janotha for example; to those like Etelka Freund, whose recordings had to be passed over in the interests of time. This thesis also raises the tricky question that if Brahms's music was performed in ways associated today with 'Romantic' playing, what does 'Romantic' actually sound like, and what was a Schumann-Brahms circle pianist's version of Romantic as compared to those in the Liszt circle for example? This would mean comparing the described and recorded performance styles of pianists considered to be moderate and extreme within the Schumann-Brahms circle, with those considered to be moderate and extreme beyond that circle. It would also be revealing to see whether the Schumann-Brahms pianists played Brahms's music differently as compared to Robert Schumann's, given late-Romantic efforts to distance the former's mind and body from that of the latter. As many of these polemics invoked

issues of race and gender, in our continued efforts to problematize how what we think about composers affects how we wish their music to sound, it seems pertinent to investigate how understandings of the race, gender and sexual orientation of canonic composers affects performance norms, both during their own time as well as our own.

In general, it also seems important to expand this work to other canonic composers for whom early recordings of their works are suggestive of identities that radically oppose those currently protected by performance norms for their music. Here I'm thinking in particular of composers like Claude Debussy for example, and even those of the Second Viennese School. Around this same time period, it would also be fascinating to investigate links between late-Romantic classical and early-twentieth-century jazz pianism. Jazz pianist Erroll Garner's 1945 improvisation on Debussy's *Clair de Lune* certainly argues that there are compelling connections to be made here. Finally, this work also poses some serious questions for those engaged in nineteenth-century form and analysis. All too often I find myself attending lectures wherein a theorist discusses Brahms's formal, harmonic, rhythmic and melodic procedures as if it is a given that everything would have been played exactly as it appears on the score, and in the ways we expect today. It would thus be fascinating to propose a performance-based theory of Brahmsian form and analysis. Exactly what this might look like is unclear at this juncture, though in light of Ilona Eibenschütz's Brahms style, perhaps acknowledging the near impossibility of such an undertaking is itself one of research outcomes of this thesis.

Clearly, there remains much to do. For the moment however, I will never again look at Brahms's notated detail as prescriptive but rather as a possibility-laden field of potential that can be added to, rewritten, omitted and embellished as the spirit moves me;

I will see formal structures as media upon which other shifting, fleeting, impassioned and tumultuous shapes can be freely imposed; I will see time as elusive, perpetually leaning forward, asymmetrical and irregular; and I will see tone, expression and technique as the tools with which Brahms's lifelong inner and outer turmoil can be extrovertedly, sentimentally and virtuosically writ large across the deceptive coherence of his scores. I will also continue to chase after ghostly spirits so that I may further problematize my need to protect Brahms's hale and hearty identity in order to convince others of my own. At the moment this is admittedly a rather lonely mission, as few are ready to relinquish the romanticized Brahms of our imaginations. I remain positive however that in time others will also be inspired to Romanticize him: after all, "time changes everything for better or for worse, no, not changes, but shapes and unfolds."[531]

[531] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe*, in Avins, *BLL*, 319.

List of Works Cited

Abert, Hermann, and Frederick H. Martens. "Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms." *The Musical Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (April, 1927): 329 - 343. Accessed December 15, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/738416.

Adler, Guido, and W. Oliver Strunk. "Johannes Brahms: His Achievement, His Personality, and His Position." *The Musical Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (April 1933): 113 - 142. Accessed June 22, 2011. http://www.jstor.org/stable/738793.

"Amina Goodwin's Concert." *The Manchester Guardian* (January 17, 1882): 5. Accessed July 9, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/478999526?accountid=16376.

Avins, Styra. *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Beardsley, Roger, and Daniel Leech-Wilkinson. "A Brief History of Recording to ca. 1950." London: Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM), 2009. Accessed October 27, 2014. http://www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/history/p20_4_1.html.

Beller-McKenna, Daniel. "The Rise and Fall of Brahms the German." *Journal of Musicological Research* 20 (2001): 187 - 210.

Binns, Richard. "Brahms: Some Thoughts towards a Re-Valuation." *The Musical Times* 65, no. 977 (July 1, 1924): 599 - 601. Accessed December 14, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/911692.

Botstein, Leon. "Brahms and Nineteenth-Century Painting." *19th-Century Music* 14, no. 2 (Autumn, 1990): 154 - 168. Accessed June 20, 2011. http://www.jstor.org/stable/746200.

Bozarth, George S., and Walter Frisch. "Johannes Brahms." *Oxford Music Online*. Accessed May 31, 2012. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51879pg2.

--------. "Johannes Brahms: At the Summit." *Oxford Music Online*. Accessed May 31, 2012. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51879pg4.

"Brahms and Friedberg." *The New York Times* (May 29, 1932): X6. Accessed October 23, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/100598792?accountid=16376.

Brahms, Johannes. *Sämtliche Werke*. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926 - 27; repr. Ann Arbor: J. W. Edwards, 1949. Accessed via IMSLP Petrucci Music Library, http://imslp.org/wiki/Sämtliche_Werke_(Brahms,_Johannes).

Brittan, Francesca. "Berlioz and the Pathological Fantastic: Melancholy, Monomania, and Romantic Autobiography." *19th-Century Music* 29, no. 3 (Spring, 2006): 211 - 239. Accessed January 13, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/ncm.2006.29.3.211.

Brooks, William. "Historical Precedents for Artistic Research in Music: The Case of William Butler Yeats." In *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology,* edited by Darla Crispin and Bob Gilmore, 185 - 196. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014.

Brown, Clive. *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750 - 1900.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Brownell, Mike D. Review of *Brahms Piano Concertos 1 & 2*, John Lill (piano), ASV/Resonance 204 (2006), CD. Accessed January 22, 2013. http://www.allmusic.com/album/brahms-piano-concertos-1-2-mw0001388024.

Burkholder, J. Peter. "Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music." *19th-Century Music* 8, no. 1 (Summer, 1984): 75 - 83. Accessed August 8, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/746255.

"Carl Friedberg's Recital: A New Pianist Appears in Carnegie Hall." *The New York Times* (November 3, 1914): 11. Accessed October 23, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/97603172?accountid=16376.

Chapin, Schuyler. Liner notes to the original SONY release of *Glenn Gould with The New York Philharmonic Orchestra and Leonard Bernstein*. Sony Classical SK60675 ADD. In "Bernstein and Gould Play Brahms," http://wssmlsy.wordpress.com/2010/10/30/bernstein-and-gould-play-brahms/.

Chissell, Joan. "Brahms: Piano Works." Review of Artur Rubinstein (piano), RCA SB6845 (1971), LP. *Gramophone* (July 1971): 204.

"Clara Josephine Schumann." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 37, no. 640 (June 1, 1896): 369. Accessed April 18, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3368020.

"Clara Schumann." *The Academy* 49, no. 1252 (May 30, 1896): 453 - 454. Accessed October 24, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/1298650908?accountid=16376.

Clements, Andrew. "Brahms: Ballades; Intermezzos; Schubert: Piano Sonata in E Minor D566; Schumann: Piano Sonata No. 2 in G minor." Review of Wilhelm Kempff (piano), BBC Legends, BBCL 4114-2 (2001), CD. *The Guardian* (June 27, 2003). Accessed January 3, 2013.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2003/jun/27/classicalmusicandopera.artsfeatures2?INTCMP=S

--------. "Brahms: Intermezzi Op. 117; Piano Pieces Op. 118 & 119." Review of Lars Vogt (piano), EMI Classics 7243 5 57543 2 5 (2003), CD. *The Guardian* (March 5, 2004). Accessed October 25, 2014. http://www.theguardian.com/music/2004/mar/05/classicalmusicandopera.shopping1.

Cook, Nicholas, Eric Clarke, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, and John Rink, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.

"Crystal Palace." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 28, no. 530 (April 1, 1887): 214 - 215. Accessed April 18, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3359796.

Da Costa, Neal Peres. *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Davies, Fanny, and Frederick Corder. "Robert Schumann: About Schumann's Pianoforte Music." *The Musical Times* 51, no. 810 (August 1, 1910): 493 - 496. Accessed April 9, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/908084.

Davies, Fanny. "On Schumann: And Reading Between the Lines." *Music and Letters* 6, no. 3 (July 1925): 214 - 223. Accessed April 9, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/726684.

Deiters, Hermann. "Johannes Brahms: A Biographical Sketch." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 29, no. 539 (January 1888): 9 - 11. Accessed December 14, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3359841.

Delasaire, William. "Player-Piano Notes." *The Musical Times* 67, no. 996 (February 1, 1926): 144, 149. Accessed February 5, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/912957.

Derenburg, Mrs. Carl (Ilona Eibenschütz). "My Recollections of Brahms." *The Musical Times* 67, no. 1001 (July 1926): 598 - 600. Accessed August 23, 2014. http://www.jstor.org/stable/911829.

DiClemente, Ann Riesbeck. "Brahms Performance Practice in a New Context: The Bruce Hungerford Recorded Lessons with Carl Friedberg." PhD Dissertation: University of Maryland, 2009. Accessed July 24, 2013. ProQuest Dissertations.

Distler, Jed. "Brahms: Piano Sonata Op. 5." Review of Evgeny Kissin (piano), RCA 09026-638862 (2001), CD. Accessed January 5, 2013. http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-9506/?search=1.

--------. "Brahms: F minor Sonata, Ballades/Sokolov." Review of Grigory Sokolov (piano), OPUS 111 - 30366 (2005), CD. Accessed January 5, 2013. http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-8520/?search=1.

--------. "Brahms." Review of Romain Descharmes (piano), *Brahms Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 5., Six Pieces, Op. 118*. Claudio CR5786-2 (2007), CD. *Gramophone* (April 2008): 80.

--------. "Liaisons Volume Two." Review of Dejan Lazic (piano), Channel Classics 27609 SACD LIASONS vol. 2 (2009), CD. Accessed December 29, 2012. http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-15050/?search=1.

--------. "Brahms & Liszt: Piano Sonatas/Cechová." Review of Jitka Cechová (piano), Supraphon SU 4021-2 131 (2010), CD. Accessed January 5, 2013. http://www.classicstoday.com/review/review-15746/?search=1.

--------. "Everything's coming up Rose." Review of Jerome Rose (piano). *Gramophone* (July 2011). Accessed December 29, 2012. http://www.gramophone.co.uk/blog/piano-notes/everythings-coming-up-rose.

Dreyfus, Laurence. "Hermann Levi's Shame and Parsifal's Guilt: A Critique of Essentialism in Biography and Criticism." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 6, no. 2 (1994): 135 - 145. Accessed June 24, 2011. http://www.jstor.org/stable/823821.

---------. "Hermann Levi." *Oxford Music Online*. Accessed May 31, 2012. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/16515.

Evans, Allan. Liner notes for *Behind the Notes: Brahms Performed by Colleagues and Pupils 1903-1952.* Arbiter 160, CD. New York, 2012.

"Fanny Davies, 1861-1934." *The Musical Times* 75, no. 1100 (October 1934): 899 - 900. Accessed April 9, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/918459.

Fifield, Christopher. "Hans Freiherr von Bülow." *Oxford Music Online*. Accessed May 31, 2012. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/04307.

Fleisher, Susan Weiss Leon. "An Interview with Leon Fleisher." *The Hopkins Review* 1, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 416 - 433. Accessed January 14, 2013. doi: 10.1353/thr.0.0017.

"Friedberg at His Best." *New York Times* (January 10, 1934): 25. Accessed October 23, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/100916989?accountid=16376.

Fromm, Marie. "Some Reminiscences of My Music Studies with Clara Schumann." *The Musical Times* 73, no. 1073 (July 1, 1932): 615 - 616. Accessed October 24, 2013. http://www.jstor.org.access.authkb.kb.nl/stable/918290.

Gardner, Charlotte. “A triumph of Brahmsian thought, with playing that gets right to the heart of the composer.” Review of *Brahms Works for Solo Piano, Vol.1*, Barry Douglas (piano), Chandos CHAN 10716 (2012), CD. *BBC Music Review* (March 29, 2012). Accessed January 5, 2013. http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/reviews/h8pn.

Gehring, Franz, and Bernd Wiechert. "Karl Reinthaler." *Oxford Music Online*. Accessed May 31, 2012. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/23157.

Gereben, Janos. "San Francisco Symphony's Un-Teutonic German Requiem." Review of the San Francisco Symphony. *San Francisco Classical Voice* (November 17, 2011). Accessed February 7, 2013. http://www.sfcv.org/reviews/san-francisco-symphony/san-francisco-symphonys-un-teutonic-german-requiem.

Goldsmith, Harris. "Schnabel the Pianist." *The Musical Times* 130, no. 1756 (June 1989): 336 - 337, 339. Accessed November 3, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/966029.

Greene, Harry Plunket. "Leonard Borwick: Some Personal Recollections." *Music and Letters* 7, no. 1 (January 1, 1926): 17. Accessed October 23, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/1294599033?accountid=16376.

Greenfield, Edward. "Brahms Piano Works." Review of *Claudio Arrau: Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bernard Haitink*, Philips, (1) 6768 356, 5 records. *Gramophone* (July 1983): 140.

Grimes, Nicole. "In Search of Absolute Inwardness and Spiritual Subjectivity? The Historical and Ideological Context of Schumann's 'Neue Bahnen.'" *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 39, no. 2 (December 2008): 139 - 163. Accessed December 15, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25487551.

Harding, H. A. "Some Thoughts upon the Position of Johannes Brahms Among the Great Masters of Music." *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 33rd session (1906 - 1907): 159 - 174. Accessed December 3, 2011. http://www.jstor.org/stable/765640.

Haynes, Bruce. *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer's History of Music for the Twenty-First Century.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Holland, Bernard. “Piano: Thomas Lorango.” *New York Times Music Review* (February 7, 1988). Accessed January 9, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/1988/02/07/arts/piano-thomas-lorango.html?gwh=37DA005A03DA4643EE080808F10776C3.

--------. "Exploring Brahms's Dual Nature." Review of Alfred Brendel (piano) and the New York Philharmonic. *New York Times Music Review* (May 19, 1990). Accessed January 23, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/1990/05/19/arts/review-music-exploring-brahms-s-dual-nature.html.

--------. "Trios From Brahms: Challenges for All Involved." Review of the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio. *New York Times Music Review* (November 2, 2006). Accessed January 3, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/02/arts/music/02trio.html?gwh=02AE32F637D7EE04BC55380D74451D6F.

Howard-Jones, E. "Brahms in his Pianoforte Music." *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 37th Session (1910 - 1911): 117 - 128. Accessed March 12, 2011. http://www.jstor.org/stable/765704.

Hunter, Mary. "'To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer': The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 357 - 398. Accessed January 28, 2014. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jams.2005.58.2.357.

"Johannes Brahms." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 38, no. 651 (May 1, 1897): 297 - 299. Accessed October 25, 2014. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3366944.

Jolly, James. "Brahms's Piano Sonatas." Review of Julius Katchen (piano), Decca London 455 247-2LC6 (1997), CD; Antti Siirala (piano), Ondine ODE1044-2 (2004), CD; Libor Novacek (piano), Landor LAN285 (2008), CD; Evgeny Kissin (piano), RCA Red Seal 82876 52737-2 (2003), CD. *Gramophone* (September 2012). Accessed January 23, 2013. http://www.gramophone.co.uk/editorial/brahmss-piano-sonatas.

Joseph, Charles M. "The Origins of Brahms's Structural Control." *College Music Symposium* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 7 - 17. Accessed December 15, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40375155.

Kahn, Robert. "Memories of Brahms." *Music & Letters* 28, no. 2 (April 1947): 101 - 107. Accessed January 4, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/855522.

Korsyn, Kevin. "Brahms Research and Aesthetic Ideology." Review of *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives*, edited by George S. Bozarth. *Music Analysis* 12, no. 1 (March 1993): 89 - 103. Accessed December 15, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/854077.

Kozinn, Allan. "In a Pianist's Brahms, A Chopinesque Esprit." Review of Hélène Grimaud (piano). *The New York Times* (February 19, 1997). Accessed August 6, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/1997/02/19/arts/in-a-pianist-s-brahms-a-chopinesque-esprit.html.

--------. "An Evening Given to Brahms." Review of Krystian Zimerman (piano). *New York Times Music Review* (May 2, 2002). Accessed December 29, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2002/05/02/arts/music-in-review-classical-music-an-evening-given-to-brahms.html?gwh=C8BAB101CFA95296F3A1E53218754123.

Kramer, Lawrence. “Music, Metaphor and Metaphysics.” *The Musical Times* 145, no. 1888 (Autumn 2004): 5 - 18. Accessed May 31, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4149019.

Kross, Siegfried. “Brahms and E. T. A. Hoffman.” *19th-Century Music* 5, no. 3 (Spring, 1982): 193 - 200. Accessed December 15, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/746459.

Leech-Wilkinson, Daniel. *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance.* London: Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM), 2009. Accessed October 26, 2014. http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/intro.html.

"Leonard Borwick." *The Musical Times* 66, no. 992 (October 1, 1925): 942 - 943. Accessed July 18, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/913463.

"Leonard Borwick Plays: English Pianist Again Makes a Deep Impression." *New York Times* (December 9, 1914): 13. Accessed October 23, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/97558007?accountid=16376.

"London Concerts, Pianists of the Month: Schnabel and the Schubert Sonatas." *The Musical Times* 76, no. 1103 (January 1935): 65 - 70. Accessed July 22, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/949150.

Lourie, Arthur. "The Crisis of Form." Translated by S. W. Pring. *Music & Letters* 14, no. 2 (April 1933): 95 - 103. Accessed December 14, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/728908.

"Madame Adelina de Lara." *The Guardian* (November 27, 1961): 2. Accessed April 9, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/184768266?accountid=16376.

"Madame Schumann." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 25, no. 494 (April 1, 1884): 201 - 202. Accessed April 18, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3359258.

“Madame Schumann.” *The Manchester Guardian* (May 21, 1896): 6. Accessed June 21, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/483290791?accountid=16376.

"Manliness in Music." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 30, no. 558 (August 1, 1889): 460 - 461. Accessed January 4, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3360514.

McColl, Sandra. "A Model German." *The Musical Times* 138, no. 1849 (March 1997): 7 - 12. Accessed December 15, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1003516.

"Mdlle. Ilona Eibenschütz." *The Academy* 39, no. 977 (January 17, 1891): 72. Accessed May 11, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/1298628997?accountid=16376.

"Mdlle. Ilona Eibenschütz." *The Observer* (March 11, 1894): 6. Accessed May 11, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/473805826?accountid=16376.

"Miscellaneous Concerts, Intelligence, etc." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 32, no. 577 (March 1, 1891): 167 - 170. Accessed April 10, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3362705.

"Miscellaneous Concerts, Intelligence, etc." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 35, no. 614 (April 1, 1894): 263 - 265. Accessed May 11, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3361872.

“Miscellaneous Intelligence.” *The Musical Times* 51, no. 805 (March 1, 1910): 183 - 184. Accessed July 22, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/906763.

“Miss Amina Goodwin’s Classical Chamber Concert.” *The Manchester Guardian* (January 8, 1884): 8. Accessed October 23, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/479222240?accountid=16376.

"Miss Fanny Davies: A Biographical Sketch." *The Musical Times* 46, no. 748 (June 1, 1905): 365 - 370. Accessed April 9, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/903439.

"Miss Fanny Davies." *The Observer* (May 8, 1927): 21. Accessed April 10, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/481096191?accountid=16376.

"Miss Fanny Davies's Recital." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 27, no. 518 (April 1, 1886): 207. Accessed April 10, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3361451.

Mitchell, Evan. "A Romantic Night Out: Dvořák, Tchaikovsky and Brahms at the Dallas Symphony." *Bachtrack* (January 15, 2013). Accessed February 7, 2013. http://www.bachtrack.com/review-dallas-symphony-gonzalez-benedetti.

"Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 27, no. 516 (February 1, 1886): 82. Accessed April 9, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3361776.

"Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 28, no. 528 (February 1, 1887): 84 - 85. Accessed April 10, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3360861.

"Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 28, no. 530 (April 1, 1887): 216 - 217. Accessed April 10, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3359798.

"Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 31, no. 574 (December 1, 1890): 730. Accessed July 18, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3362039.

"Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 34, no. 599 (January 1, 1893): 23 - 24. Accessed April 5, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3362745.

"Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 34, no. 601 (March 1, 1893): 151. Accessed May 11, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3363023.

“Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts.” *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 36, no. 624 (February 1, 1895): 97. Accessed May 11, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3364044.

“Monday Popular Concerts.” *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 13, no. 289 (March 1, 1867): 8, 13. Accessed April 18, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3352655.

“Monday Popular Concerts.” *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 22, no. 458 (April 1, 1881): 180. Accessed April 18, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3358298.

Morrison, Bryce. "Brahms - Haydn - Schubert." Review of Rudolf Firkusny (piano), BBC Legends/IMG Artists D BBCL4I73-2 (2006), CD, recorded live January 4, 1969. *Gramophone* (Awards Issue, 2006): 101.

--------. "Brahms." Review of Libor Novacek (piano), Landor LAN285 (2008), CD. *Gramophone* (October 2008): 85.

--------. "Brahms - Handel Variations." Review of *Brahms - Handel Variations*, Murray Perahia (piano), Sony Classical 88697727252 (2010), CD. *Gramophone* (November 29, 2010). Accessed January 24, 2013. http://www.gramophone.co.uk/chart/review/brahms-handel-variations.

Moseley, Roger. "Is there only Juan Brahms?" Review of *Brahms and the German Spirit*, by Daniel Beller-McKenna; *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style,* edited by Michael Musgrave and Bernard D. Sherman; and *Expressive Forms in Brahms's Instrumental Music: Structure and Meaning in His Werther Quartet,* by Peter H. Smith. *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 131, no. 1 (2006): 160 - 175. Accessed May 31, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3840474.

--------. "Reforming Johannes: Brahms, Kreisler Junior and the Piano Trio in B, Op. 8." *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 132, part 2 (2007): 252 - 305. Accessed June 20, 2011. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30161409.

"Mr. Borwick's Recital: An English Pianist Coming Unheralded Makes a Success." *The New York Times* (December 9, 1911): 13. Accessed October 23, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/97122744?accountid=16376.

"Mr. Popper's Concert." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 33, no. 587 (January 1, 1892): 23 - 24. Accessed April 5, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3365264.

Musgrave, Michael. *A Brahms Reader*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Musgrave, Michael, and Bernard D. Sherman, eds. *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

"Music in Belfast." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 42, no. 697 (March 1, 1901): 189. Accessed May 11, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3368115.

"Music in Birmingham." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 32, no. 5 (June 1, 1891): 346 - 347. Accessed April 5, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3363098.

“Music in Manchester.” *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 23, no. 468 (February 1, 1882): 82 - 83. Accessed July 22, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3358566.

"Music of the Week: The Playing of Mr. Leonard Borwick." *The Observer* (February 13, 1921): 10. Accessed October 23, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/480788506?accountid=16376.

O'Connell, Clive. "Ohlsson Plays Brahms." Review of Garrick Ohlsson (piano). *The Sydney Morning Herald* (November 26, 2012). Accessed January 2, 2013. http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/ohlsson-plays-brahms-20121125-2a1e2.html.

Oestreich, James R. "Krystian Zimerman Brings Balance to Brahms and Liszt." Review of Krystian Zimerman (piano). *New York Times Music Review* (March 29, 1990). Accessed January 9, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/1990/03/29/arts/review-piano-krystian-zimerman-brings-balance-to-brahms-and-liszt.html.

--------. "The Piano at Full Power in Brahms." Review of Garrick Ohlsson (piano) and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. *New York Times Music Review* (January 12, 1998). Accessed January 9, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/1998/01/12/arts/music-review-the-piano-at-full-power-in-brahms.html.

"Our London Correspondence." *The Manchester Guardian* (March 30, 1904): 4. Accessed May 11, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/474339971?accountid=16376.

Page, Tim. "Clara Schumann and Her Pupils." *The New York Times* (April 26, 1987): H32. Accessed April 9, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/110781133?accountid=16376.

Parker, D. C. "Music and the Grand Style." *The Musical Quarterly* 8 no. 2 (April 1922): 161 - 179. Accessed December 15, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/738228.

Philip, Robert. *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900 - 1950.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

"Pianoforte Recitals." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 32, no. 580 (June 1, 1891): 341 - 342. Accessed May 11, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3363081.

"Pianoforte Recitals." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 33, no. 591 (May 1, 1892): 278. Accessed May 5, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3362520.

"Recital at Montreux Chateau de Chillon: Haydn, Brahms, Liszt." Review of Denis Kozhukhin (piano), September 11, 2011. Accessed January 22, 2013. http://deniskozhukhin.com/2011/09/11/recital-at-montreux-chateau-de-chillon-haydn-brahms-liszt/.

Rockwell, John. "Watts Offers Four Brahms Pieces." Review of Andre Watts (piano). *New York Times Review* (April 9, 1981). Accessed January 3, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/1981/04/09/arts/recital-watts-offers-4-brahms-pieces.html.

--------. "German Bill by Radu Lupu." Review of Radu Lupu (piano). *New York Times Music Review* (January 29, 1991). Accessed December 29, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/29/arts/review-piano-german-bill-by-radu-lupu.html?gwh=A7D31769948DA4FCE162E27842A872D2.

Rogers, James Frederick. "The Health of Musicians." *The Musical Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (October 1926): 614 - 622. Accessed December 14, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/738343.

--------. "Genius and Health." *The Scientific Monthly* 23, no. 6 (December 1926): 509 - 518. Accessed December 14, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/7670.

Rountree, Kathleen. "The short-lived career of Ilona Eibenschütz." *The American Music Teacher* 43, no. 5 (April 1994): 14. Accessed May 13, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/217451599?accountid=16376.

Saffle, Michael, and Jeffrey R. Saffle. "Medical Histories of Prominent Composers: Recent Research and Discoveries." *Acta Musicologica* 65, no. 2 (July - December, 1993): 77 - 101. Accessed December 15, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/932980.

Sainte-Beuve, Charles Augustin. *Selected Essays*. Edited and translated by Francis Steegmuller and Norbert Guterman. London: Lowe & Brydone Ltd., 1965.

Sams, Eric. “Schumann's Hand Injury.” *The Musical Times* 112, no. 1546 (December, 1971): 1155 - 1159. Accessed December 15, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/954772.

Saunders, William. "Leonard Borwick: A Memory and Appreciation." *The Musical Times* 67, no. 1003 (September 1, 1926): 798 - 799. Accessed July 18, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/912664.

Schauffler, Robert Haven. “Brahms, Poet and Peasant.” *The Musical Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (Oct., 1932): 547 - 558. Accessed December 15, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/738938.

Schoenberg, Arnold. "Brahms the Progressive." In *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, edited by Leonard Stein. New York, 1975.

Schumann, Ferdinand. “Brahms and Clara Schumann.” *The Musical Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (October 1916): 507 - 515. Accessed August 23, 2014. http://www.jstor.org/stable/737934.

Scott, Cyril. "The Two Attitudes." *The Musical Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (April 1919): 149 - 159. Accessed December 15, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/738072.

Sherman, Bernard D. “Orchestral Brahms and ‘Historically Informed Performance’: A Progress Report.” Accessed July 23, 2013. http://bsherman.net/Brahms_Diapason_Sherman_English.htm.

"Sir Charles Hallé's Concerts." *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 33, no. 589 (March 1, 1892): 148. Accessed April 5, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3361350.

Slåttebrekk, Sigurd, and Tony Harrison. *Chasing the Butterfly: Recreating Grieg's 1903 Recordings and Beyond*. 2010. Accessed October 29, 2014. http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/

Sontag, Susan. “On Style.” Accessed July 23, 2013. http://www.coldbacon.com/writing/sontag-onstyle.html.

Stojowski, Sigismond. "Recollections of Brahms." *The Musical Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (April, 1933): 143 - 150. Accessed July 19, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/738794.

Straus, Joseph N. “Normalizing the Abnormal: Disability in Music and Music Theory.” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 113 - 184. Accessed January 7, 2013. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jams.2006.59.1.113.

--------. "Disability and 'Late Style' in Music." *The Journal of Musicology* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 3 - 45. Accessed December 15, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jm.2008.25.1.3.

Taruskin, Richard. "Back to Whom? Neoclassicism as Ideology." Review of *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic,* by Scott Messing; *The Idea of Gebrauchsmusik: A Study of Musical Aesthetics in the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) with Particular Reference to the Works of Paul Hindemith*, by Stephen Hinton; and *Colloquium Klassizität, Klassizismus, Klassik in der Musik 1920-1950,* by Wolfgang Osthoff. *19th-Century Music* 16, no. 3 (Spring, 1993): 286 - 302. Accessed December 19, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/746396.

"The Greatness and Littleness of Clara Schumann." Review of *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life,* by Berthold Litzmann and translated by Grace E. Hadow (MacMillan and Co., 1913). *The Academy and Literature* 84, no. 2141 (May 10, 1913): 585 - 586. Accessed October 24, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/1298691218?accountid=16376.

"The Magazines." *Academy and Literature* 84, no. 2128 (February 15, 1913): 211. Accessed May 11, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/1298679246?accountid=16376.

Tommasini, Anthony. "Brahms With Fire As Well as I.Q." Review of Peter Serkin (piano). *New York Times Music Review* (March 1, 2003). Accessed February 2, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/01/arts/music-review-brahms-with-fire-as-well-as-iq.html.

--------. "For Glenn Gould, Form Followed Fingers." Review of *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould*. White Pine Pictures, 2009. *New York Times Music Review* (September 24, 2010). Accessed January 2, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/26/arts/music/26gould.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

"Two Schumann Recitals." *The Manchester Guardian* (September 17, 1952): 5. Accessed April 9, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/479352085?accountid=16376.

"University Intelligence: Gentlemen's Concerts." *The Manchester Guardian* (April 24, 1895): 8. Accessed April 9, 2013. http://search.proquest.com.access.authkb.kb.nl/docview/483220969?accountid=16376

Vernon, P. E. "The Personality of the Composer." *Music & Letters* 11, no. 1 (January, 1930): 34 - 47. Accessed December 14, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/726846.

Walker, Ernest. "Brahms." *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 25th Session (1898 - 1899): 115 - 138. Accessed May 26, 2012. http://www.jstor.org/stable/765156.

List of Sound Examples Cited by Composer and Work

Beethoven, Ludwig van. *Piano Sonata in E Flat Major*, Op. 27 no. 1.
Recorded by Artur Schnabel on January 21 and February 3, 1932. Artur Schnabel: *The Beethoven Piano Sonatas, Volume Two*. EMI RLS 754 (LP). Available on *Beethoven: Piano Works, Volume Four*. Naxos Historical 'Great Pianists Series' 8.110756 (CD), 2003.

Brahms, Johannes. *Ballade in G Minor*, Op. 118 no. 3.
Recorded by Ilona Eibenschütz in November 1903. *The Piano Gramophone & Typewriter's: Volume Four*. Appian APR 5532 (CD), 1997. Also available on *The Pupils of Clara Schumann*, Pearl GEMM CDS 99049-6 9909 (CD), 1991.

Recorded by Carl Friedberg on August 2, 1949, live in recital at Julliard. *Carl Friedberg: The Brahms/Schumann Piano Tradition*. Originally released by Zodiac 1001 (LP). Reissued on MARSTON 52015-2 (CD), 2003.

Recorded by Murray Perahia. *Brahms: Handel Variations, Op. 24; Rhapsodies, Op. 79; Piano Pieces Op. 118 & 119.* Sony Masterworks 88697794692 (CD), 2010.

--------. *Cello Sonata in E Minor*, Op. 38, first movement.
Recorded by Neal Peres Da Costa (fortepiano) and Daniel Yeadon (cello). *SCM Research DVD Project*. University of Sydney, 2012.

--------. *Hungarian Dance No. 1 in G Minor.*
Recorded by Johannes Brahms in 1889. *The Pupils of Clara Schumann*. Pearl CLA 1000 (LP), 1986. Reissued on GEMM CDS 99049-6 9909 (CD), 1991.

--------. *Intermezzo in B Minor*, Op. 119 no. 1.
Recorded by Hélène Grimaud. *Brahms Piano Pieces Op. 116 - 119*. Erato 14350 (CD), 1996.

--------. *Intermezzo in C Major*, Op. 119 no. 3.
Recorded by Carl Friedberg on July 24, 1951, live in recital at Julliard. *Carl Friedberg: The Brahms/Schumann Piano Tradition*. Originally released by Zodiac 1001 (LP). Reissued on MARSTON 52015-2 (CD), 2003.

--------. *Intermezzo in E Flat Major*, Op. 117 no. 1.
Recorded by Adelina De Lara in March 1951. *The Pupils of Clara Schumann*. Pearl CLA 1000 (LP), 1986. Reissued on GEMM CDS 99049-6 9909 (CD), 1991.

Recorded by Carl Friedberg in November 1953. *Carl Friedberg: The Brahms/Schumann Piano Tradition*. Originally released by Zodiac 1001 (LP). Reissued on MARSTON 52015-1 (CD), 2003.

Recorded by Leif Ove Andsnes. *Brahms Piano Concerto no. 1; Intermezzi Op. 117.* City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Simon Rattle. EMI Classics 7243 5 56583 2 6 (CD), 1998.

--------. *Intermezzo in E Major*, Op. 116 no. 4.
Recorded by Evgeny Kissin. *Schubert Wanderer Fantasy; Brahms Fantasien Op. 116; Liszt Ungarische Rhapsodie no. 12.* Deutsche Grammophon DG POCG 1488 (CD), 1990.

--------. *Intermezzo in E Minor*, Op. 116 no. 5.
Recorded live by Sviatoslav Richter in 1992. *Legendary Treasures, Volume 12*. Doremi 7882 (CD), 2007.

--------. *Intermezzo in E Minor*, Op. 119 no. 2.
Recorded by Ilona Eibenschütz in October 1952. *The Pupils of Clara Schumann*. Pearl GEMM CDS 99049-6 9909 (CD), 1991.

Recorded by Richard Goode. *Richard Goode Plays Brahms*. Nonesuch 7559 79154 2 (CD), 1987.

--------. *Rhapsody in G Minor*, Op. 79 no. 2.
Recorded by Adelina De Lara in 1951. *The Pupils of Clara Schumann*. Pearl CLA 1000 (LP), 1986. Reissued on GEMM CDS 99049-6 9909 (CD), 1991.

Recorded by Radu Lupu. *Radu Lupu Plays Brahms*. Decca 4757070 - 2 (CD), 2003.

--------. *Trio in C Minor*, Op. 101, first movement.
Excerpt recorded by Ilona Eibenschütz in October 1952 as part of a BBC Broadcast entitled, "Reminiscences of Brahms." Pearl CLA 1000 (LP), 1986. Reissued on GEMM CDS 99049-6 9909 (CD), 1991.

Chopin, Frédéric. *Fugue in A Minor*, B. 114.
Recorded by Nathalie Janotha on December 10, 1904. *The Piano Gramophone & Typewriter's: Volume Two*. Transferred by Bryan Crimp. Appian APR 5532 (CD), 1997.

Mendelssohn, Felix. *Sechs Lieder ohne Worte* Op. 67, no. 4.
Recorded by Nathalie Janotha on December 10, 1904. *The Piano Gramophone & Typewriter's: Volume Two*. Appian APR 5532 (CD), 1997.

Schumann, Robert. *Davidsbündlertänze*, Op. 6.
Recorded by Fanny Davies on December 10, 1930. Matrix (W)AX 5364, issued on US Columbia 67799-D (LP). Also available on *The Pupils of Clara Schumann*, Pearl GEMM CDS 99049-1 9904 (CD), 1991.

--------. *Romance in F# Major*, Op. 28 no. 2.
Recorded by Adelina De Lara in 1952. *The Pupils of Clara Schumann*. Pearl CLA 1000 (LP), 1986. Reissued on GEMM CDS 99049-5 9908 (CD), 1991.

Recorded by Carl Friedberg on May 28, 1953. *Carl Friedberg: The Brahms/Schumann Piano Tradition*. Originally released by Zodiac 1001 (LP). Reissued on MARSTON 52015-1 (CD), 2003.

--------. *Symphonic Etudes*, Op. 13, Book 2.
Recorded by Carl Friedberg on May 28, 1953. *Carl Friedberg: The Brahms/Schumann Piano Tradition*. Originally released by Zodiac 1001 (LP). Reissued on MARSTON 52015-1 (CD), 2003.

Appendix of Audio-Visual Materials

Contents of Sound Examples

Annotation Key and Scores[532]

Annotation Key

Arpeggiation:

- Order of rolling: (1)

Dislocation:

- Early: (E)
- Late: (L)

Phrasing Modification:

Local Stretching of Time:

Tempo Modification:

- Rushing:
- Slowing:

Rhythmic Alteration:

- Shorter: (S)
- Longer: (L)
- Earlier: (E)
- Together:

Elision:

Truncation:

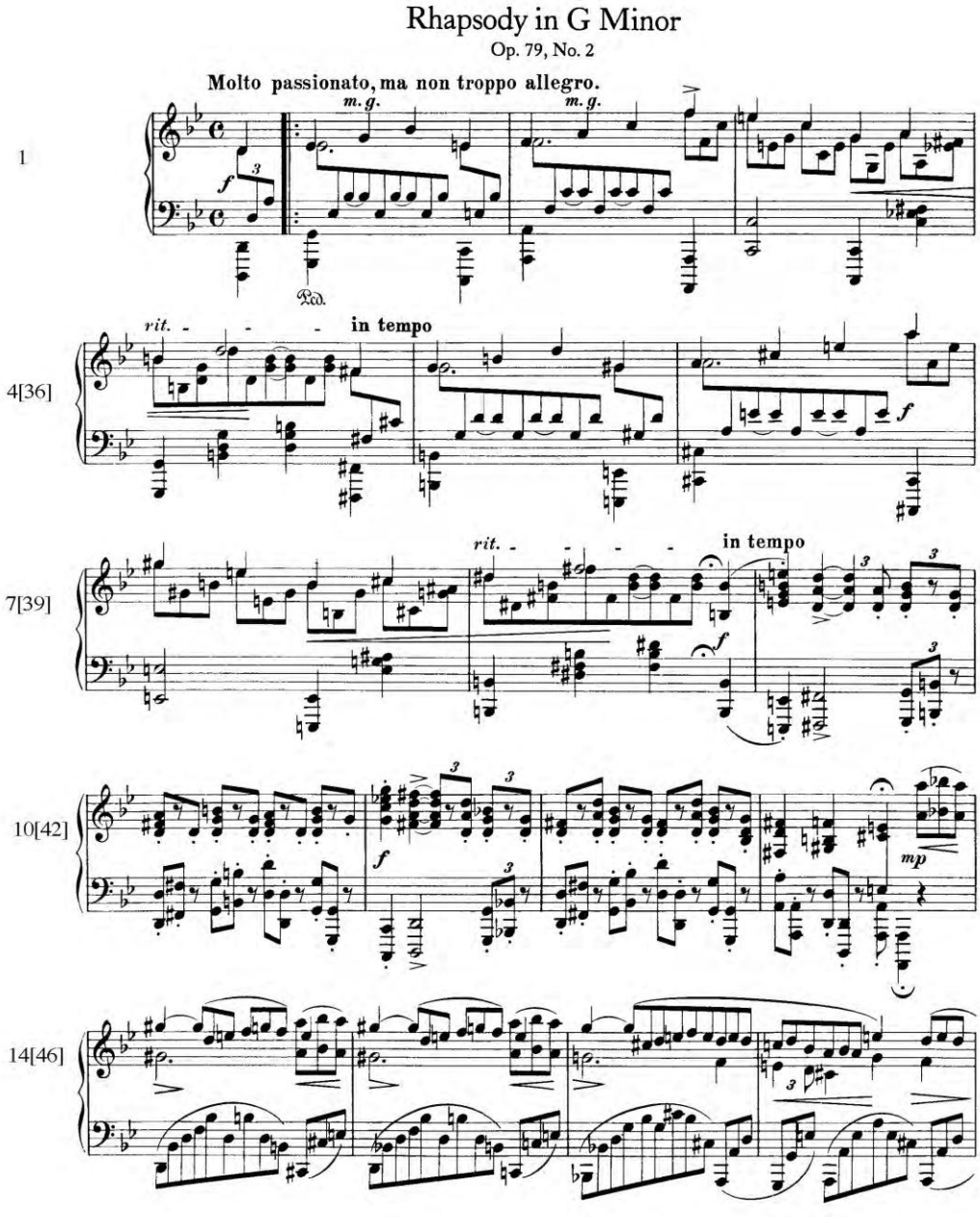
- Added:
- Removed:

Sonic Visualiser Analysis Needed:

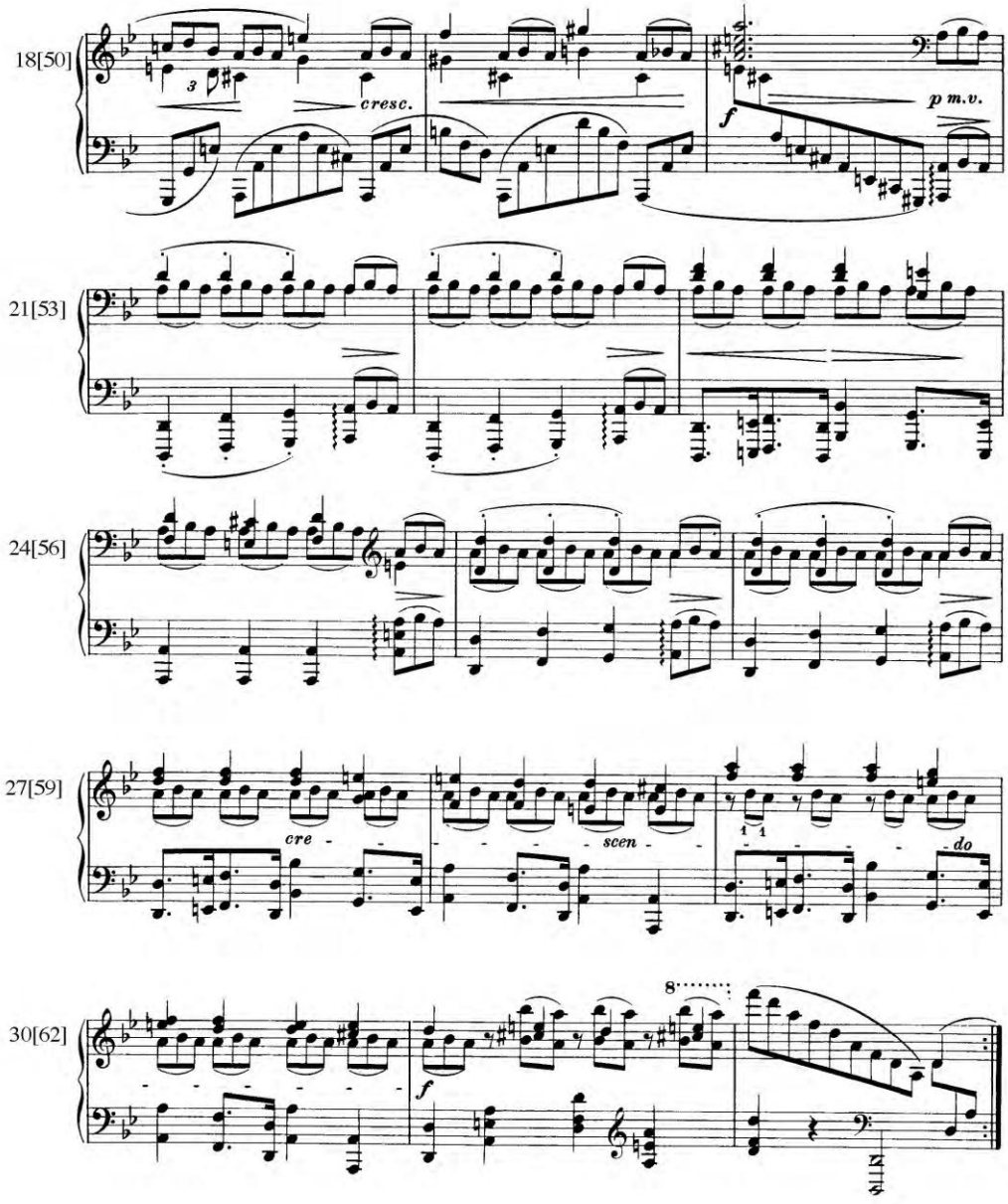
[532] All scores are from Johannes Brahms, *Sämtliche Werke* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926 - 27, repr. Ann Arbor: J. W. Edwards, 1949), accessed via IMSLP Petrucci Music Library, http://imslp.org/wiki/Sämtliche_Werke_(Brahms,_Johannes).

Contents of Score Examples

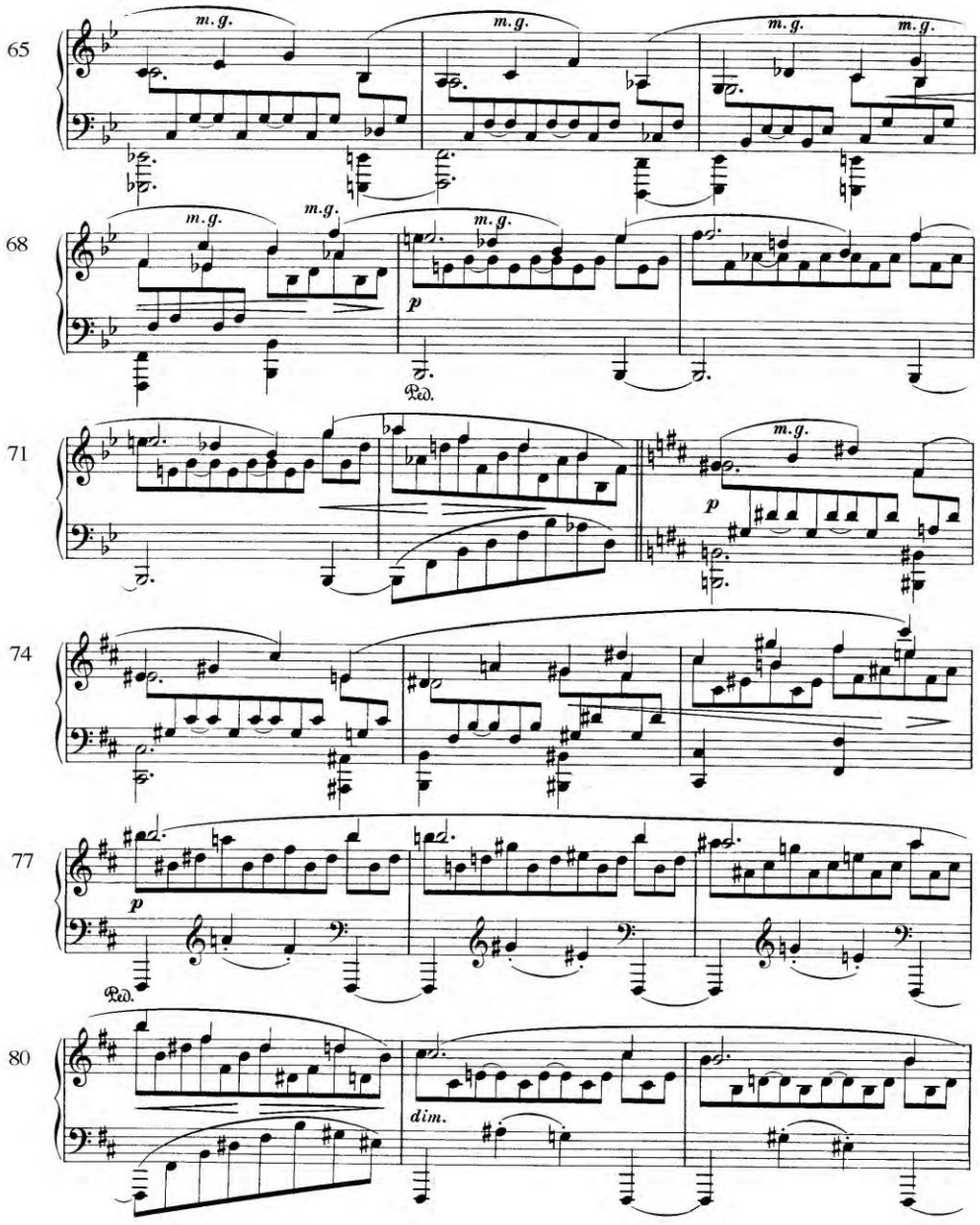
Score Example 4.2.1



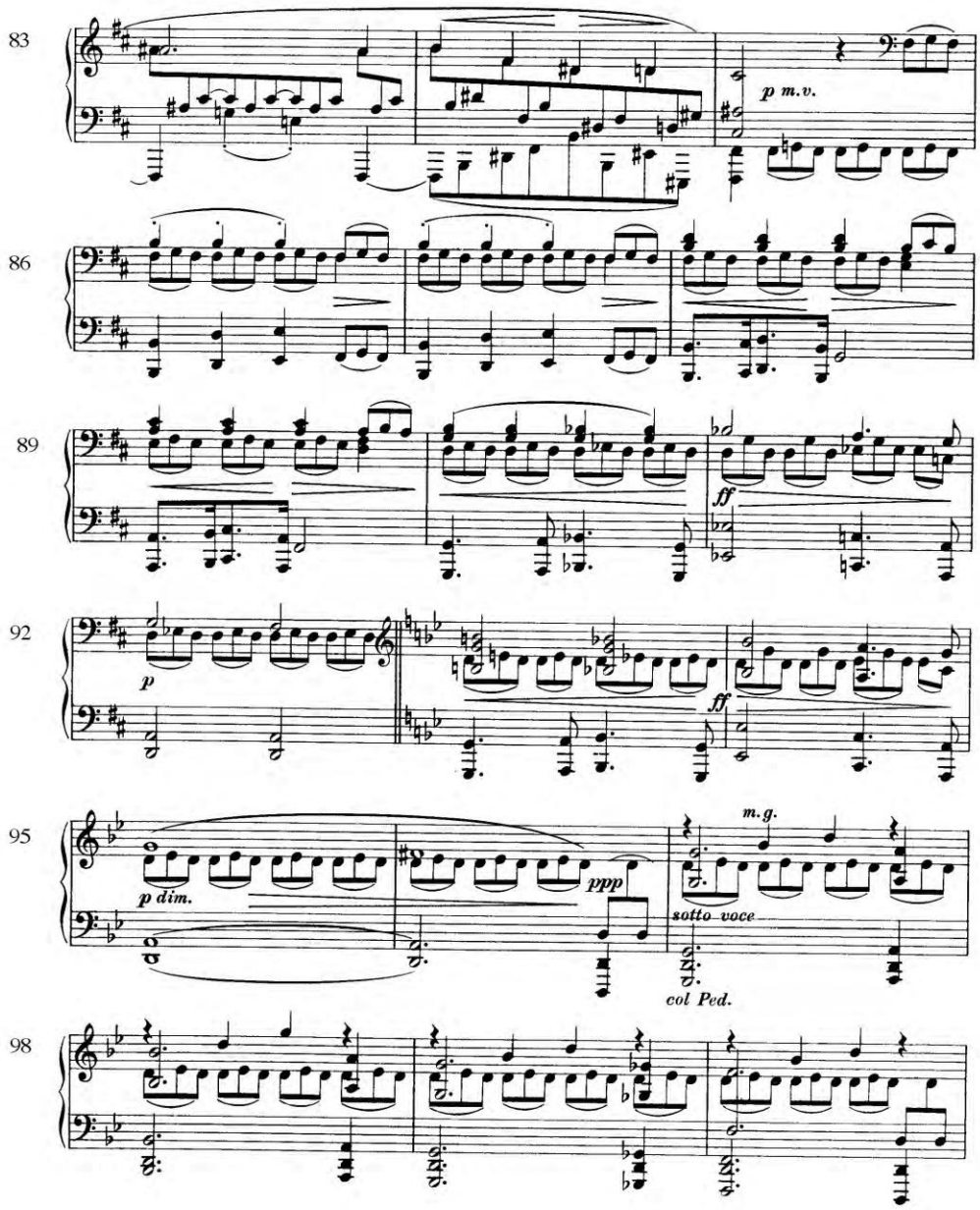
Rhapsody in G Minor Op. 79/2



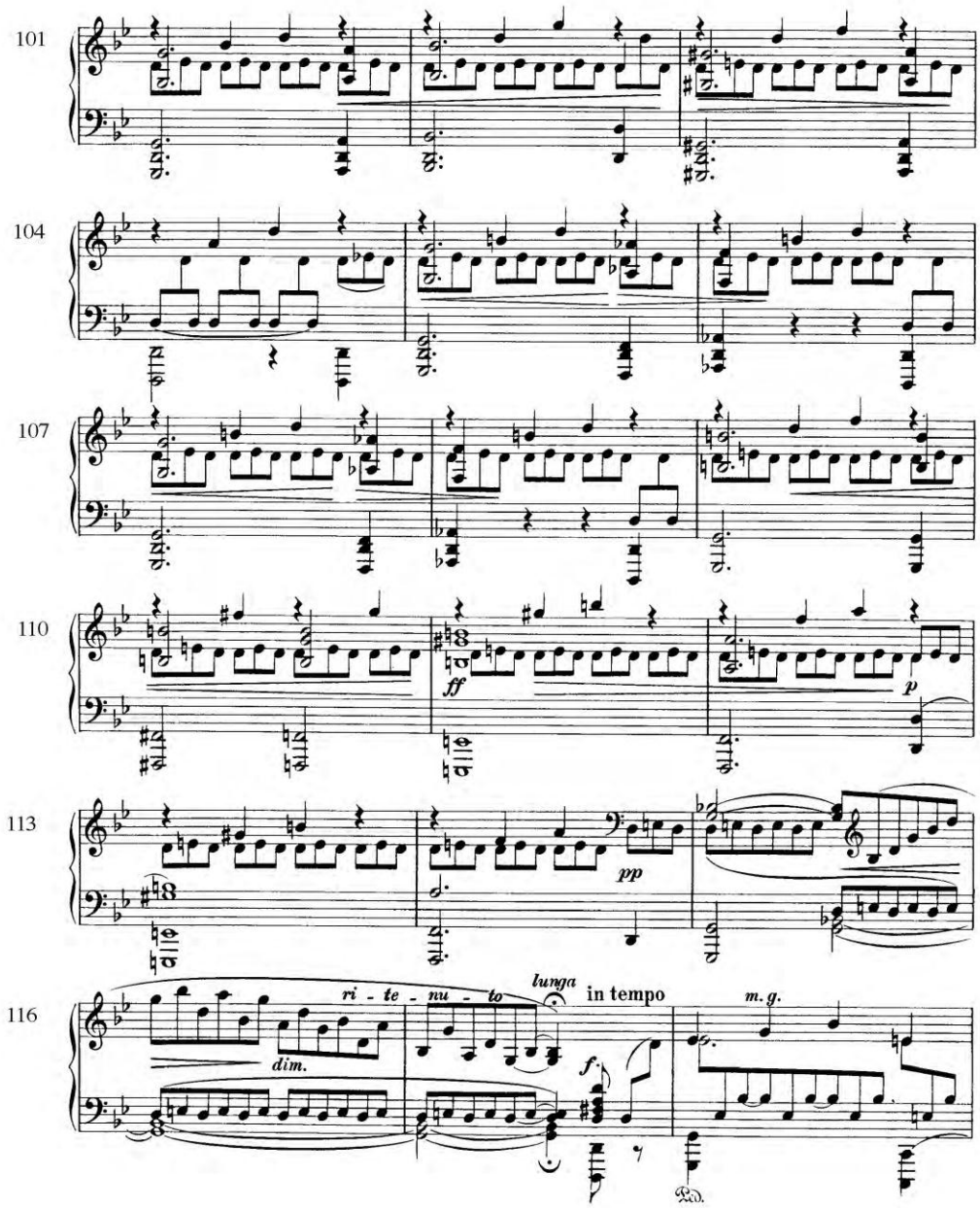
Rhapsody in G Minor Op. 79/2



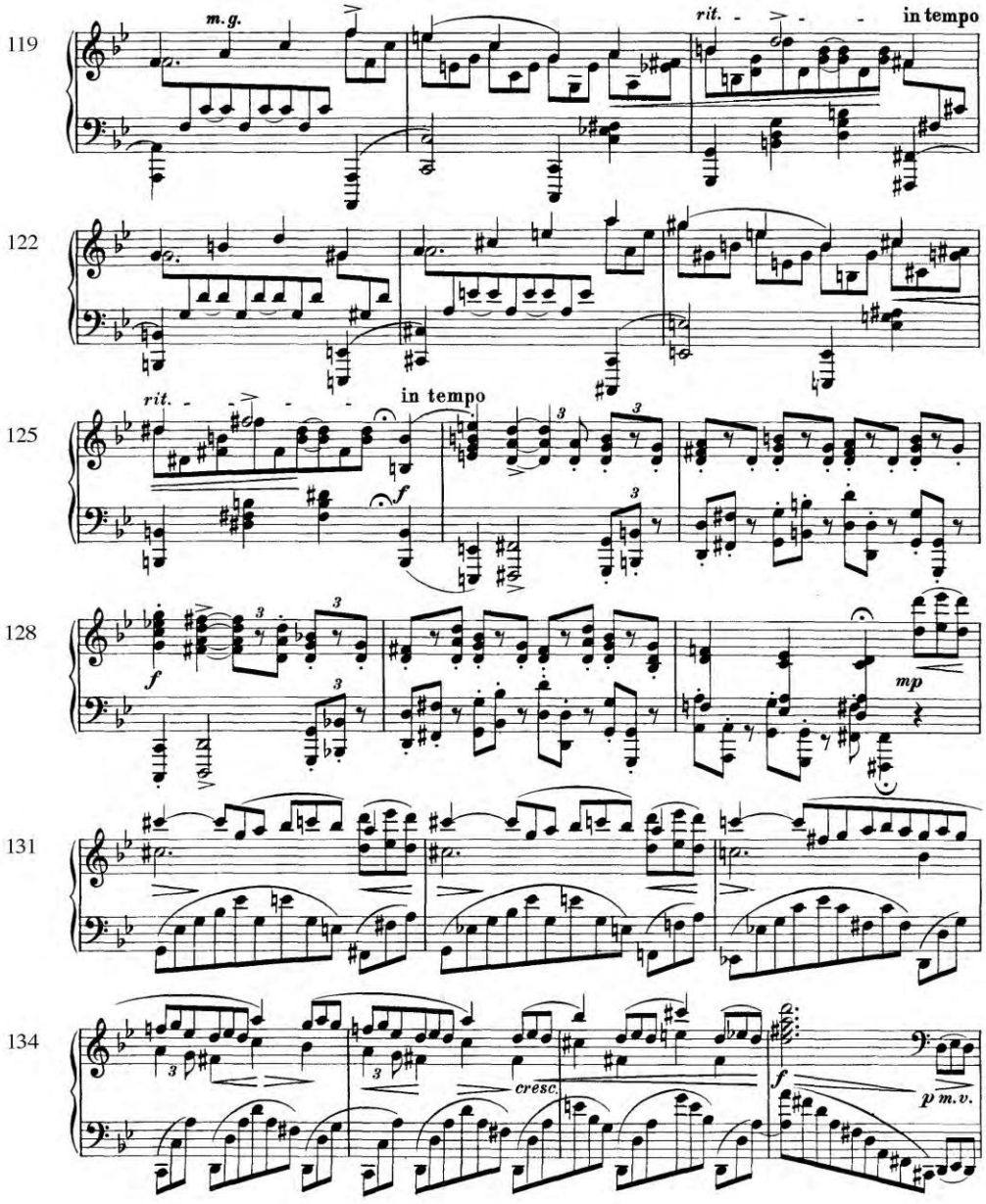
Rhapsody in G Minor Op. 79/2



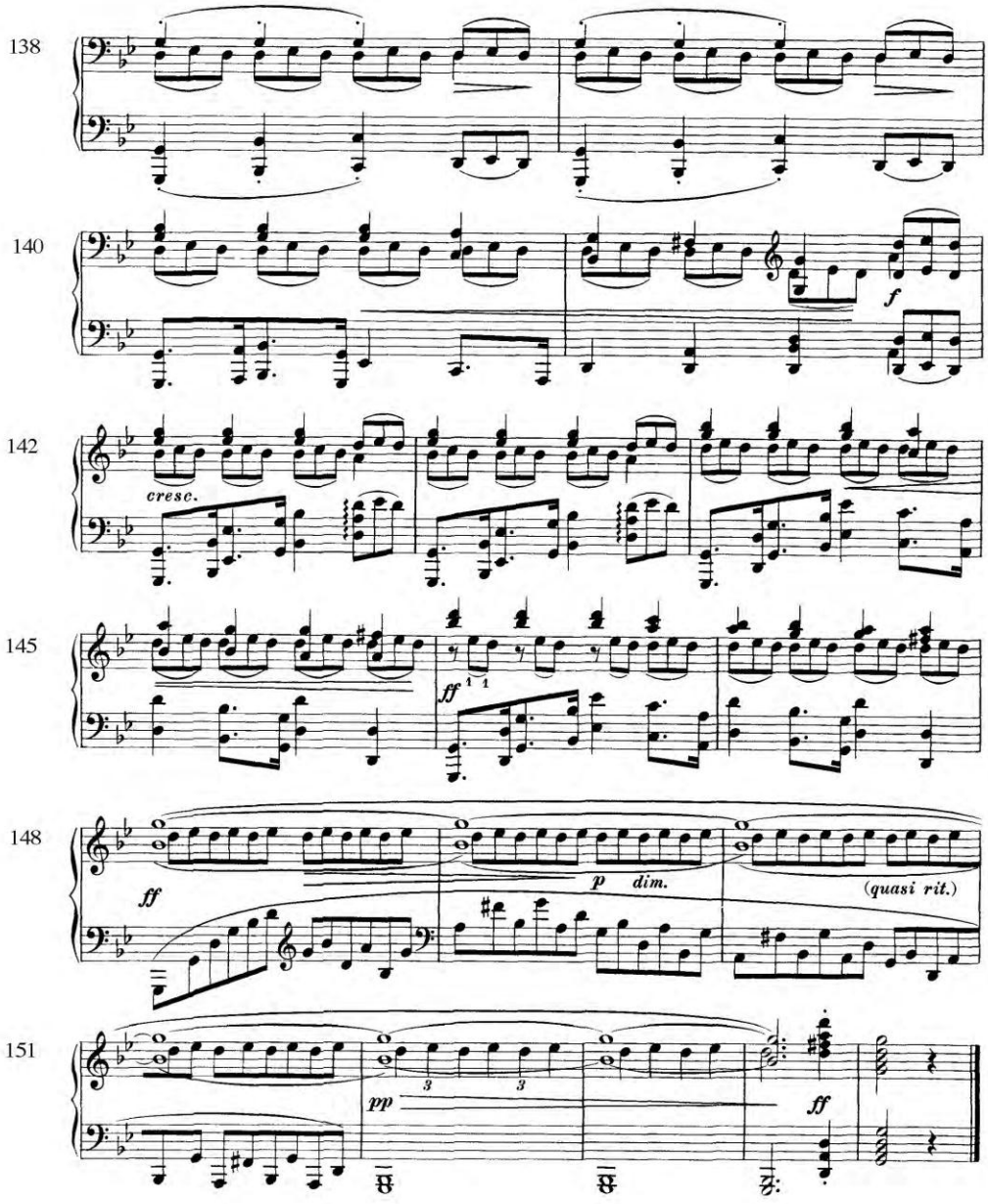
Rhapsody in G Minor Op. 79/2



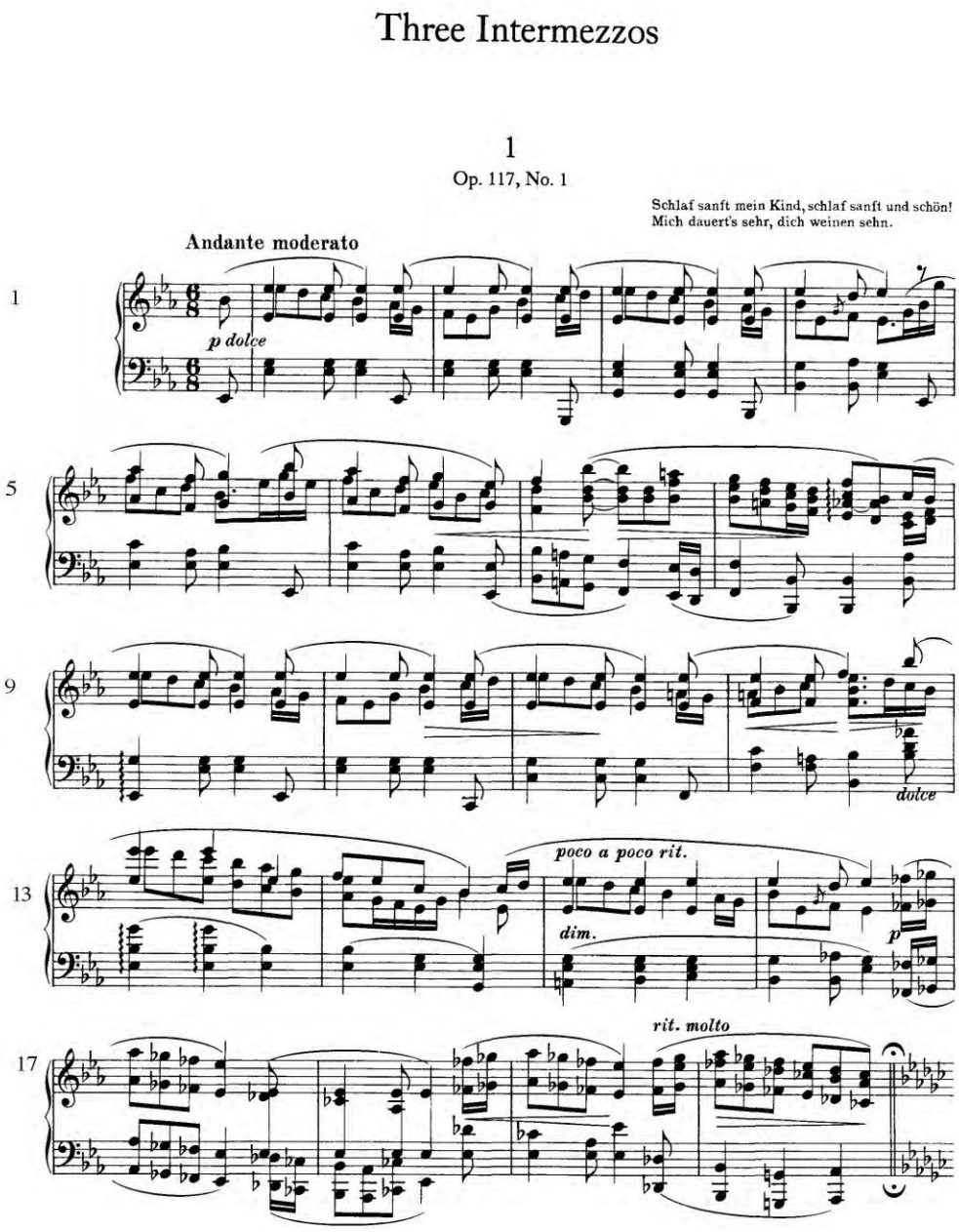
Rhapsody in G Minor Op. 79/2



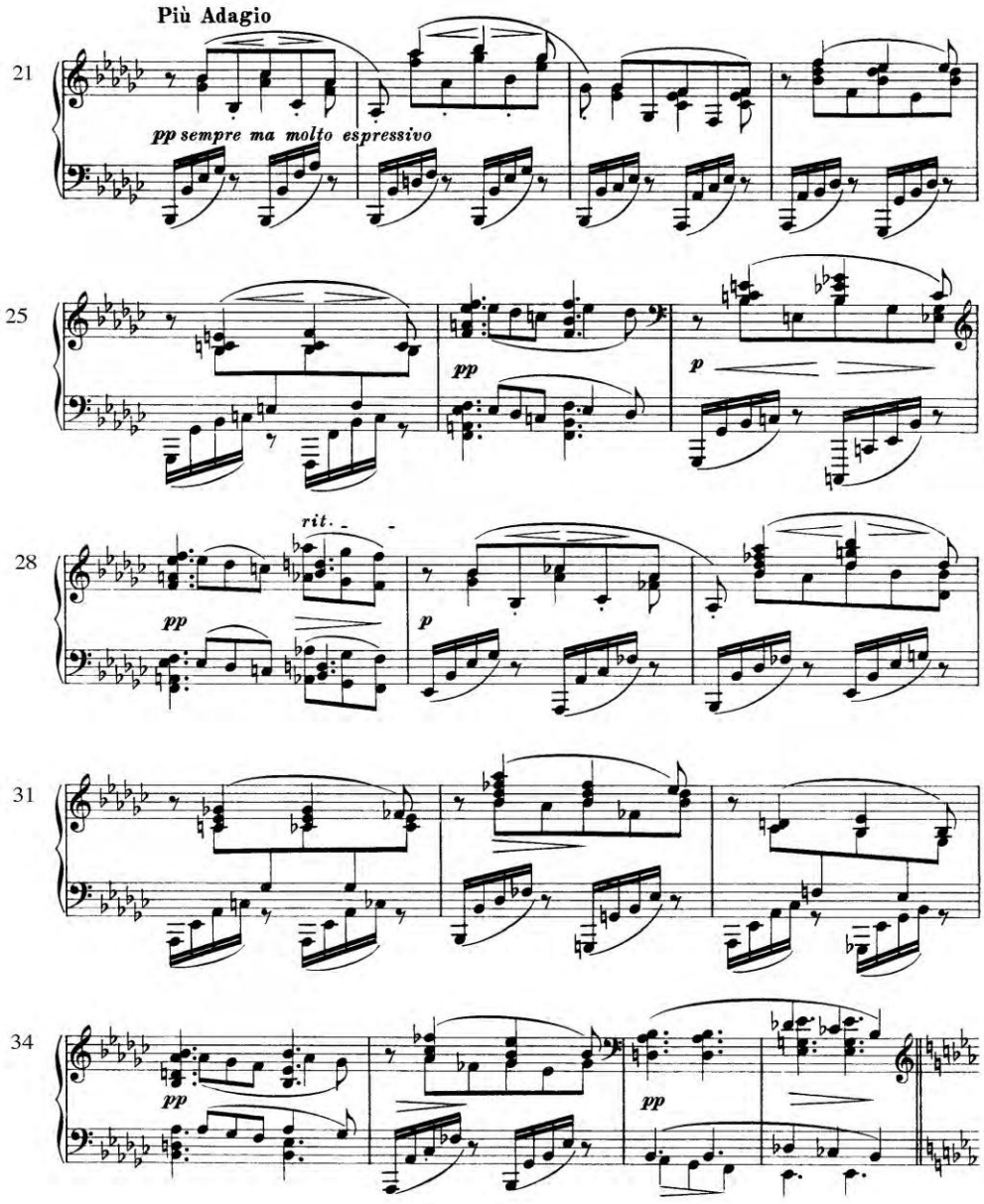
Rhapsody in G Minor Op. 79/2



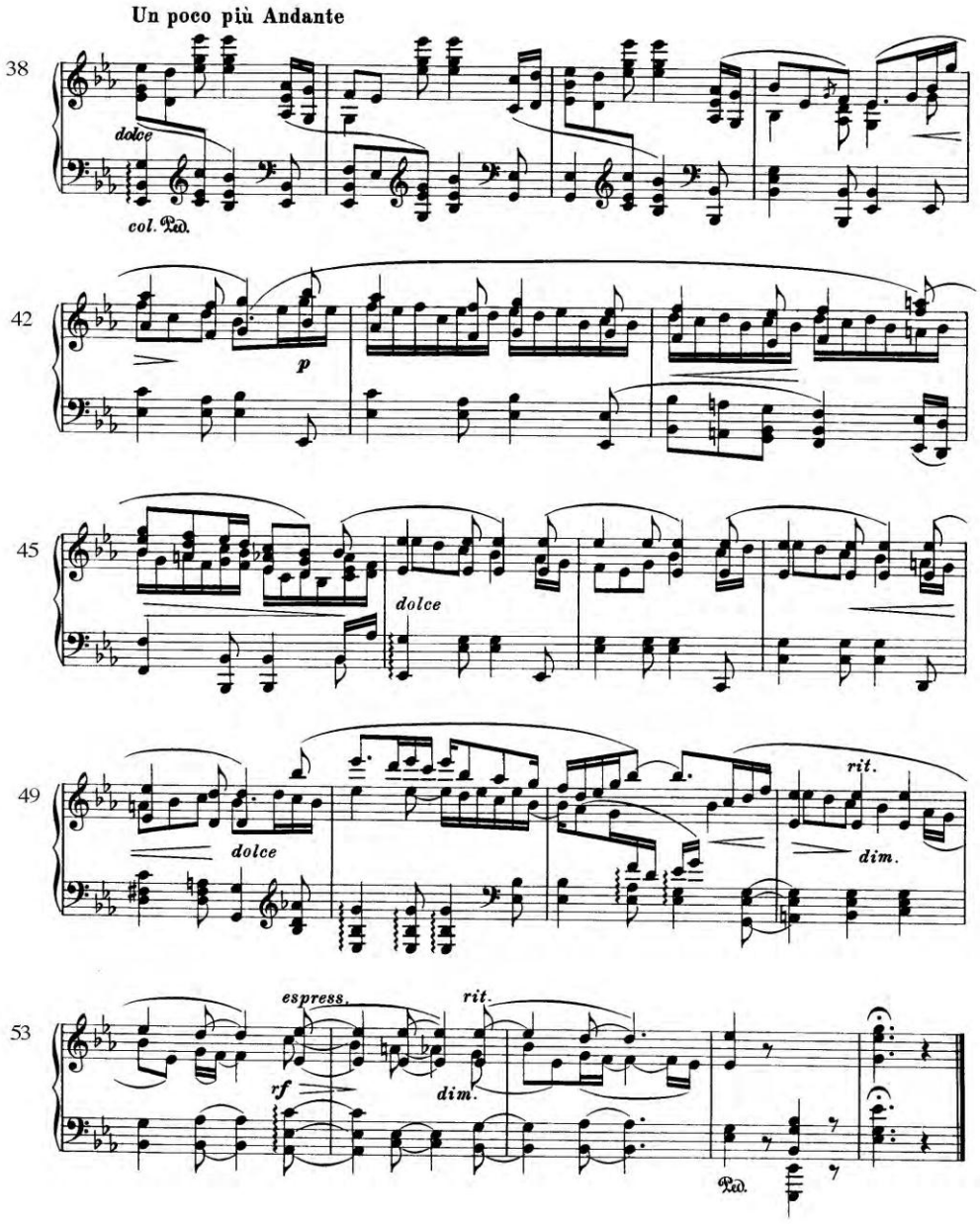
Score Example 4.2.2



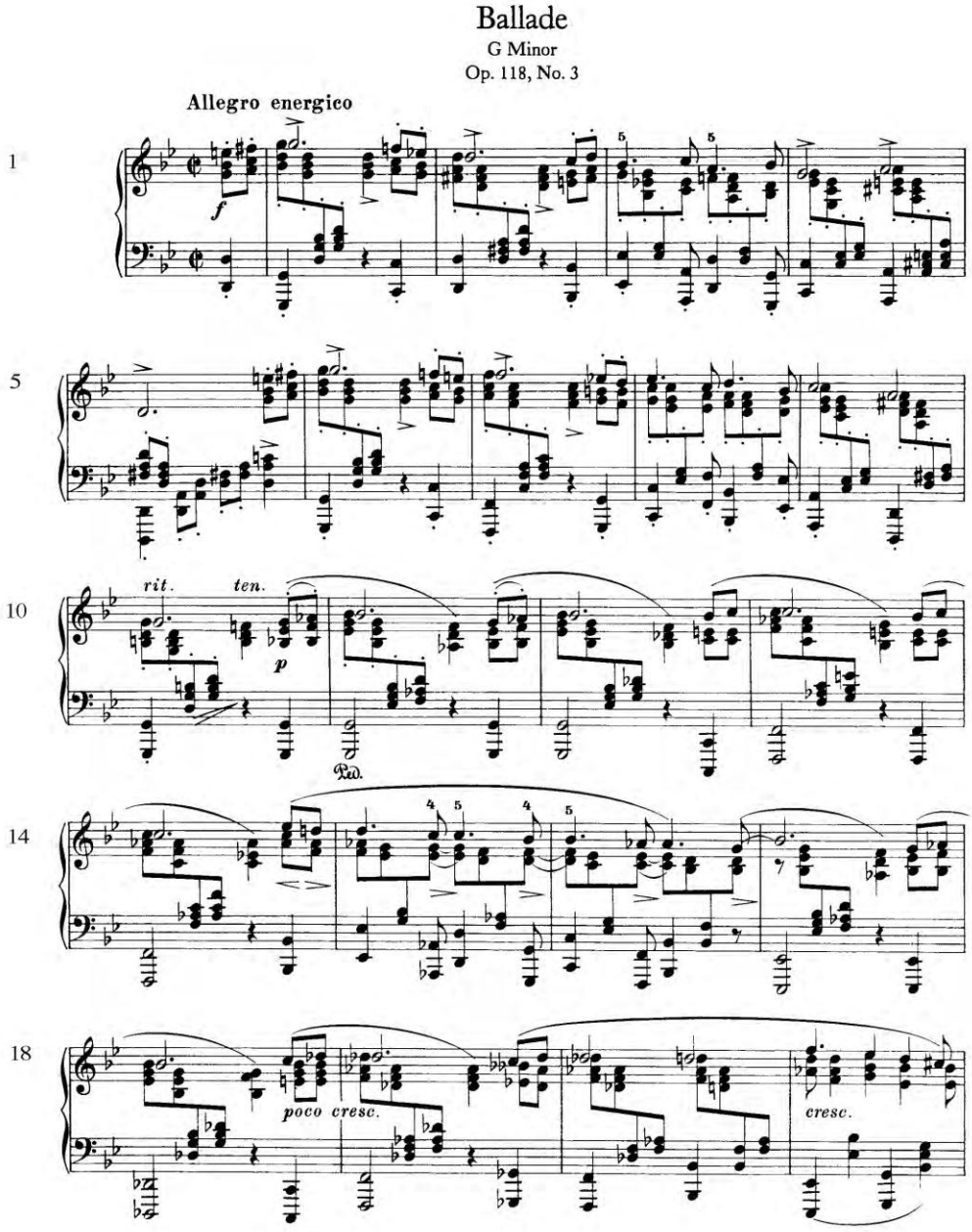
Eb Major Op. 117/1



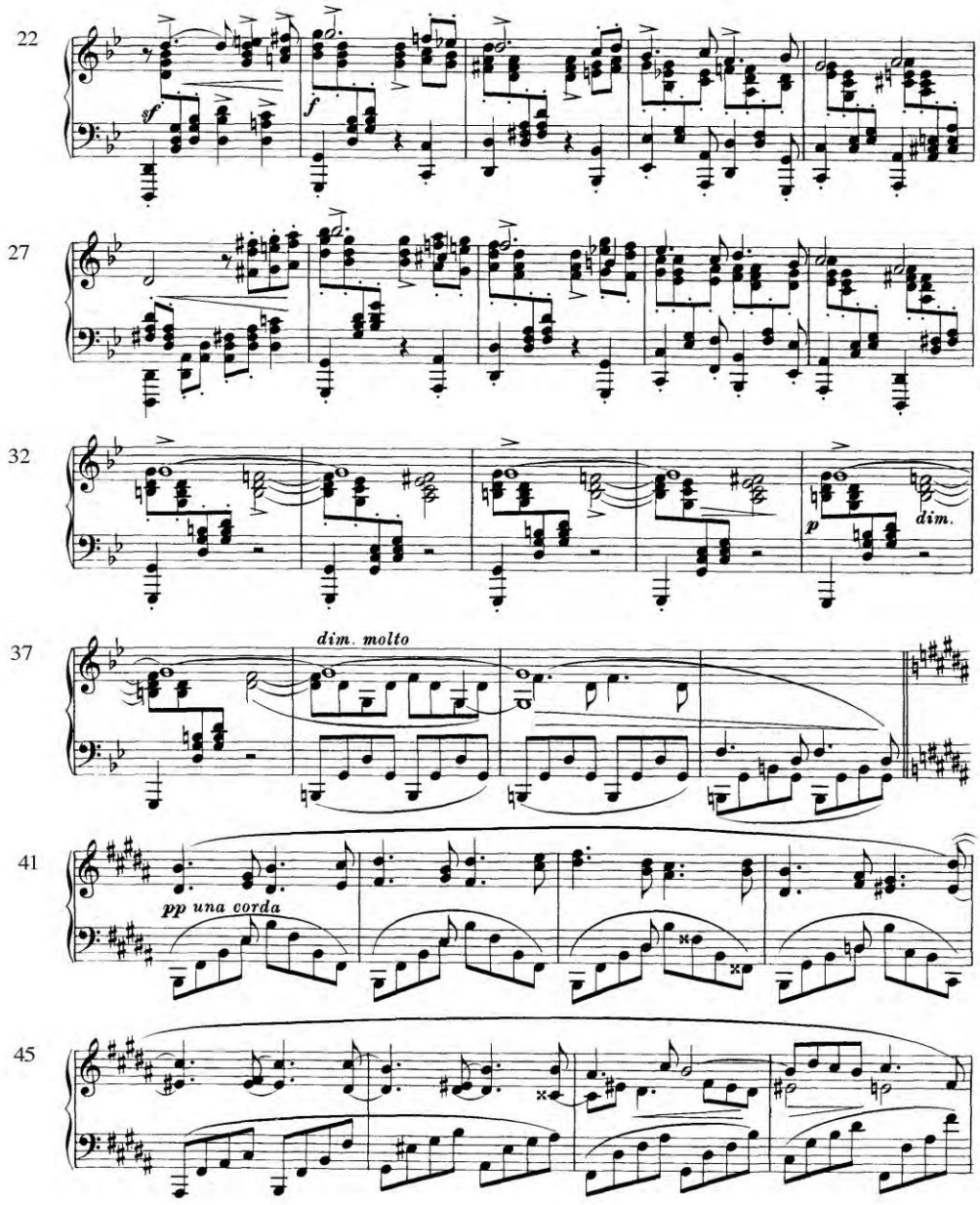
Eb Major Op. 117/1



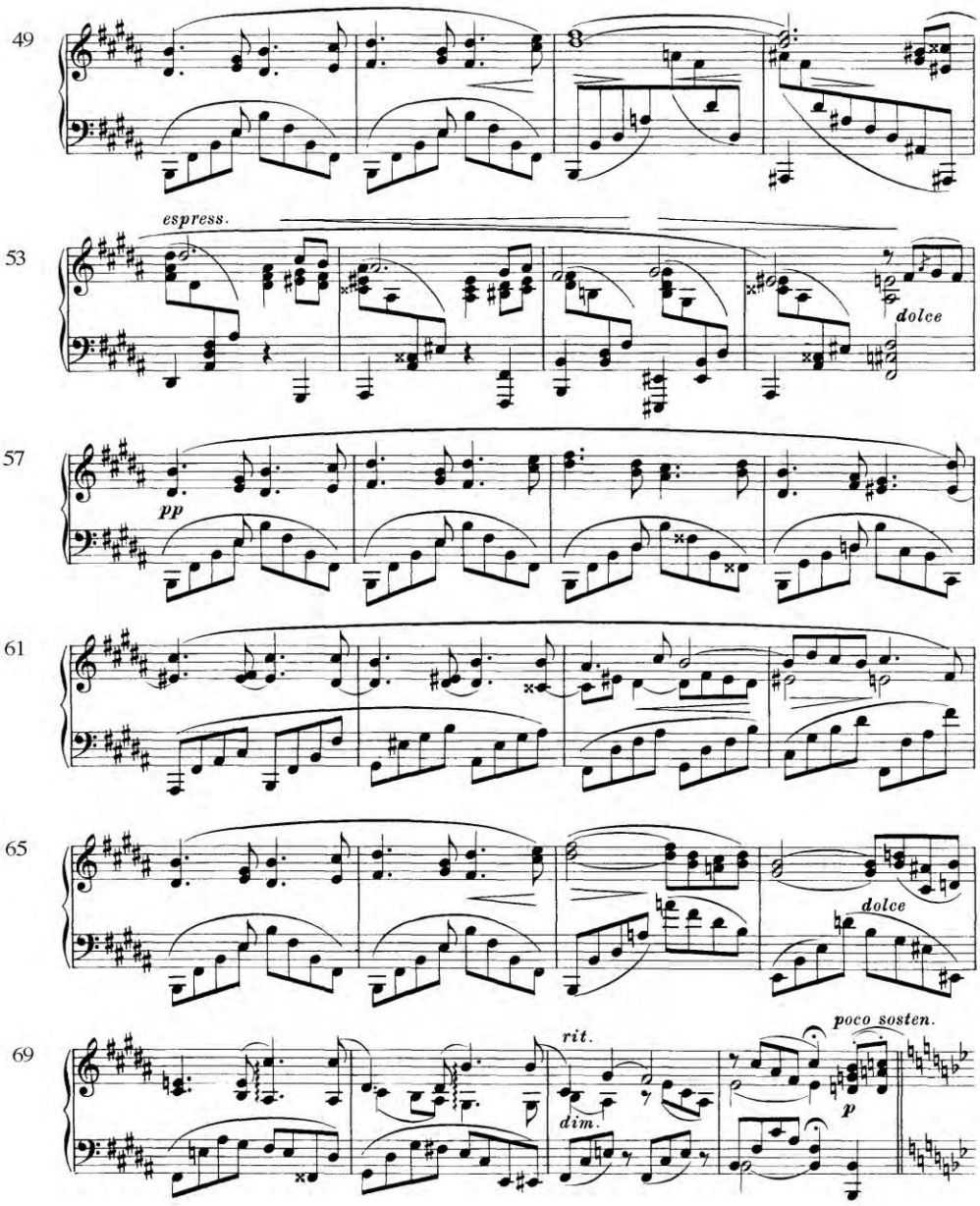
Score Example 4.2.3



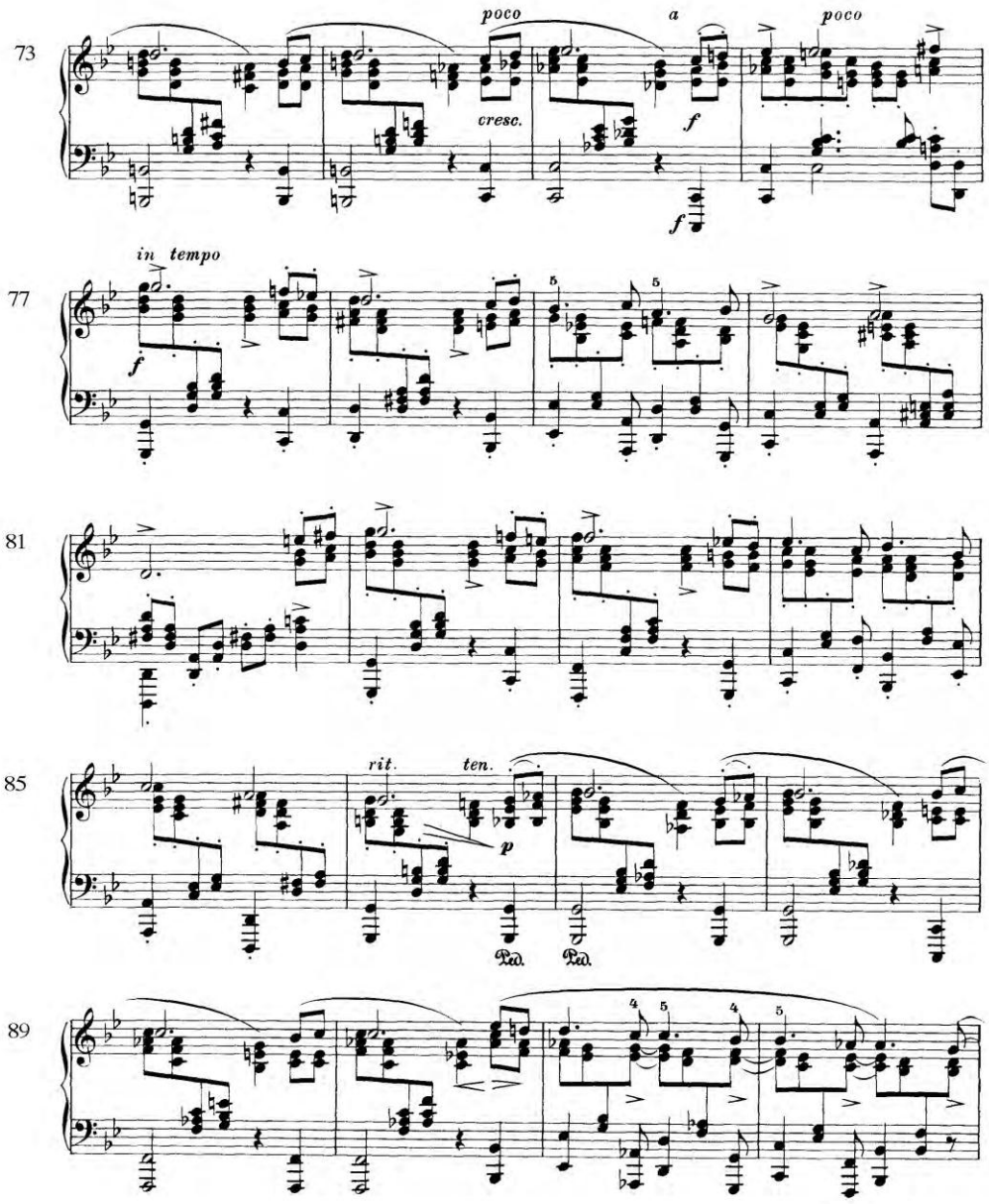
Ballade in G Minor Op. 118/3



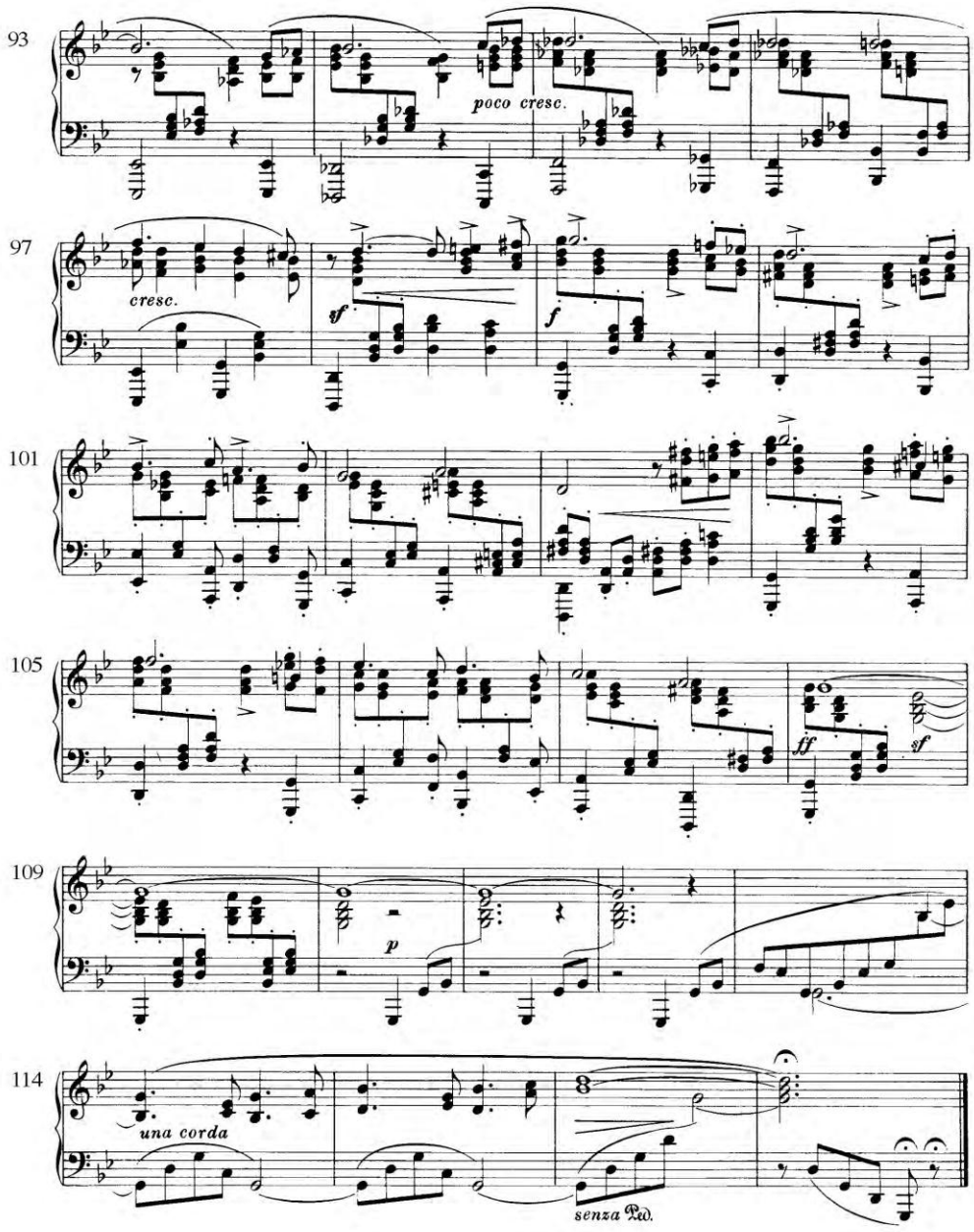
Ballade in G Minor Op. 118/3



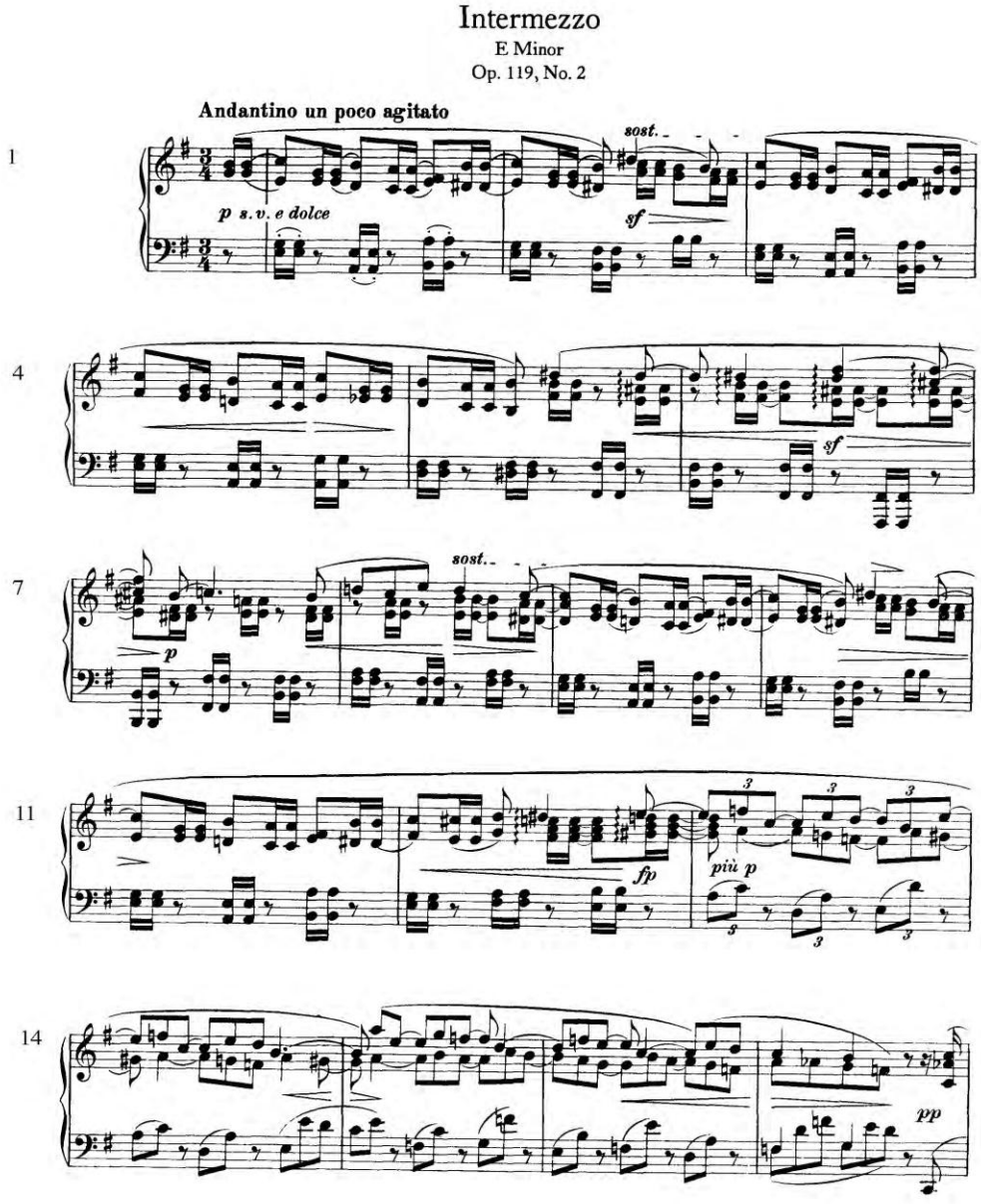
Ballade in G Minor Op. 118/3



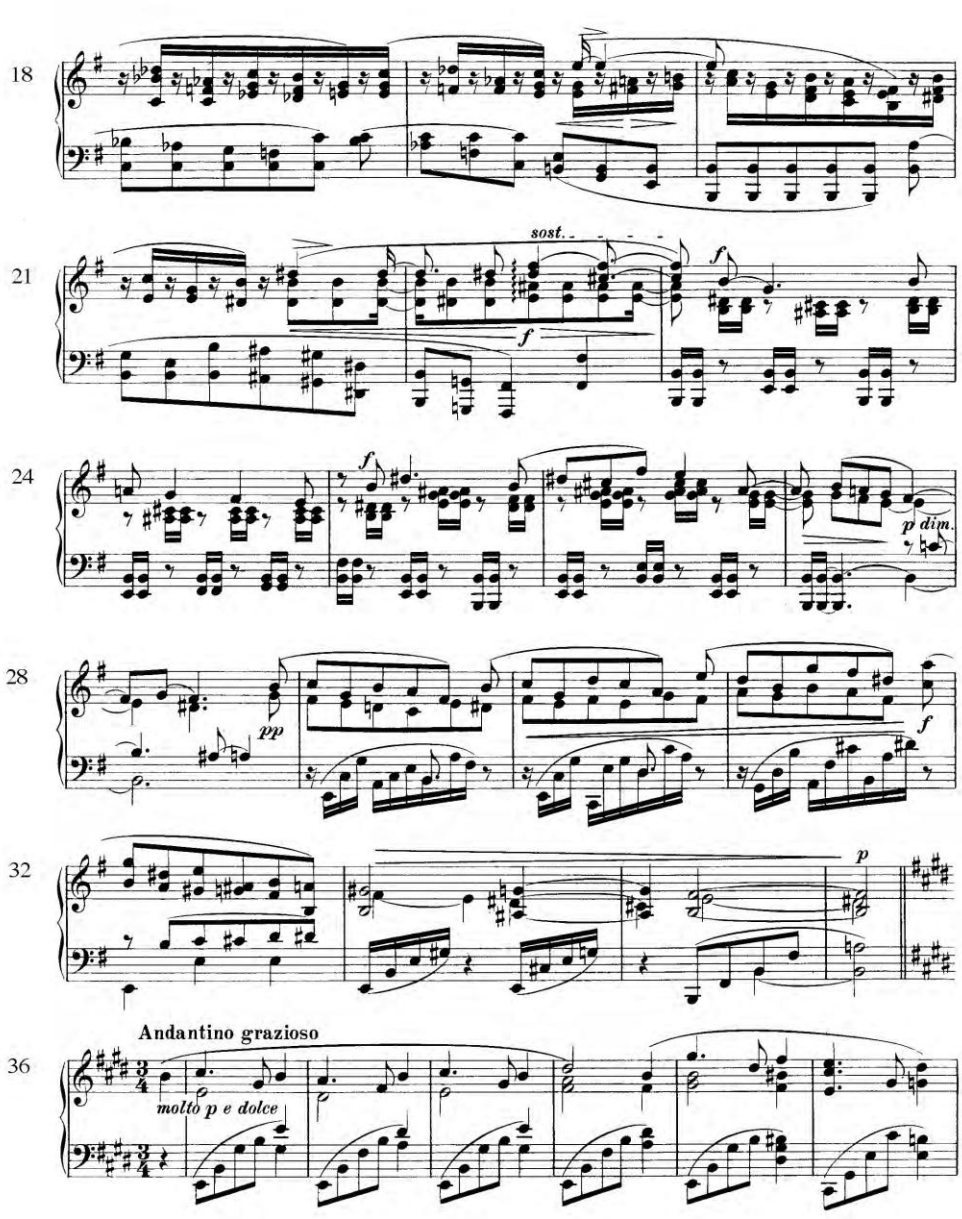
Ballade in G Minor Op. 118/3



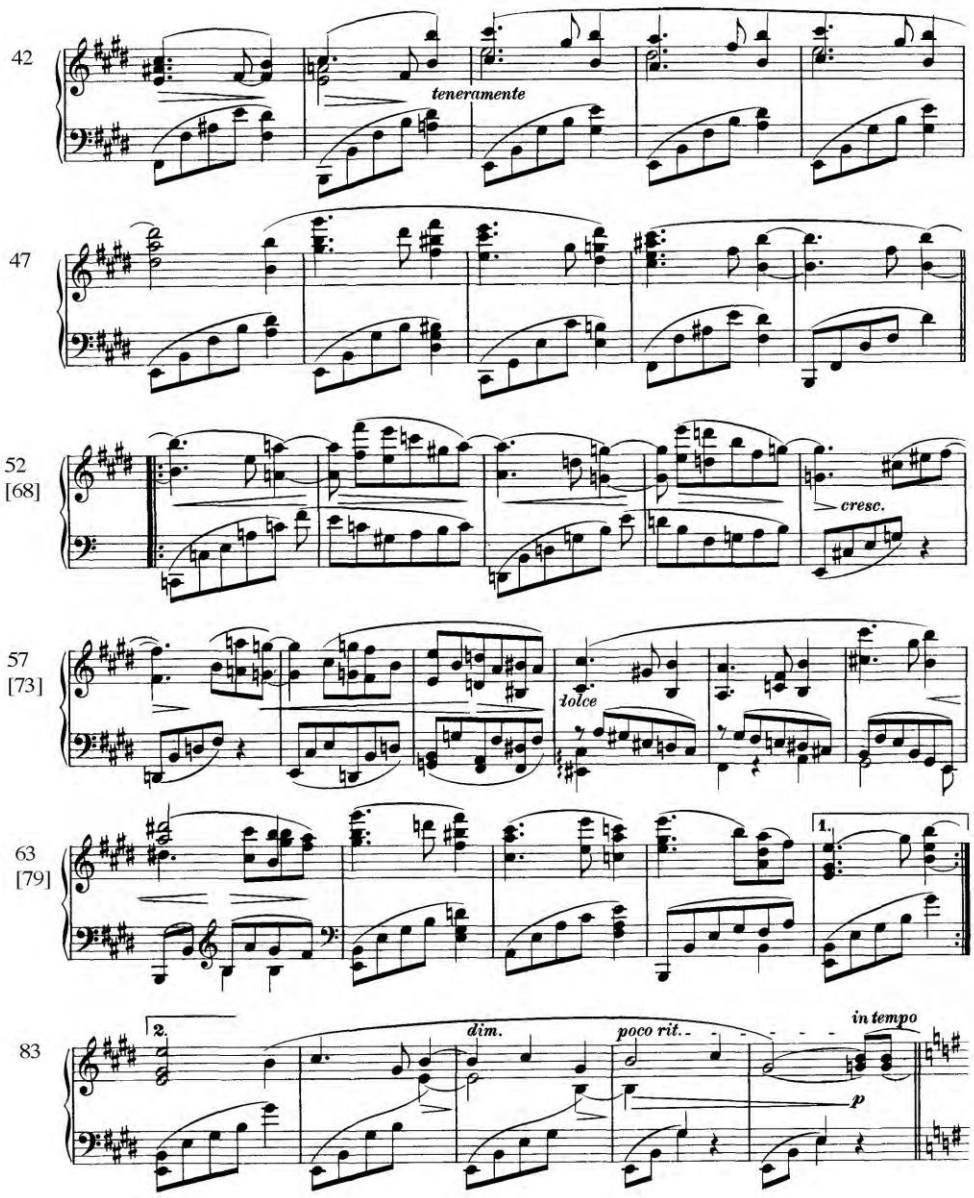
Score Example 4.2.4



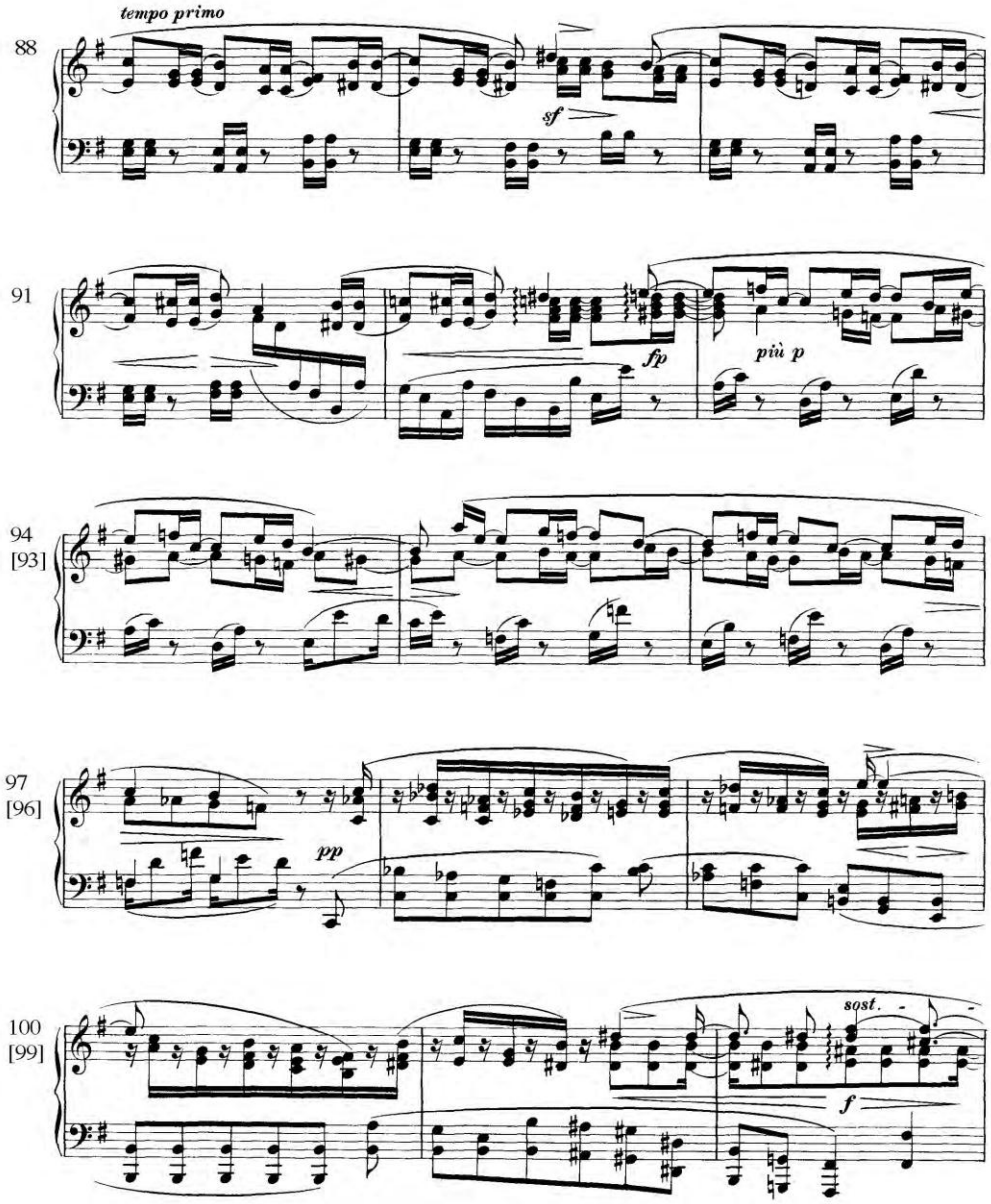
Intermezzo in E Minor Op. 119/2



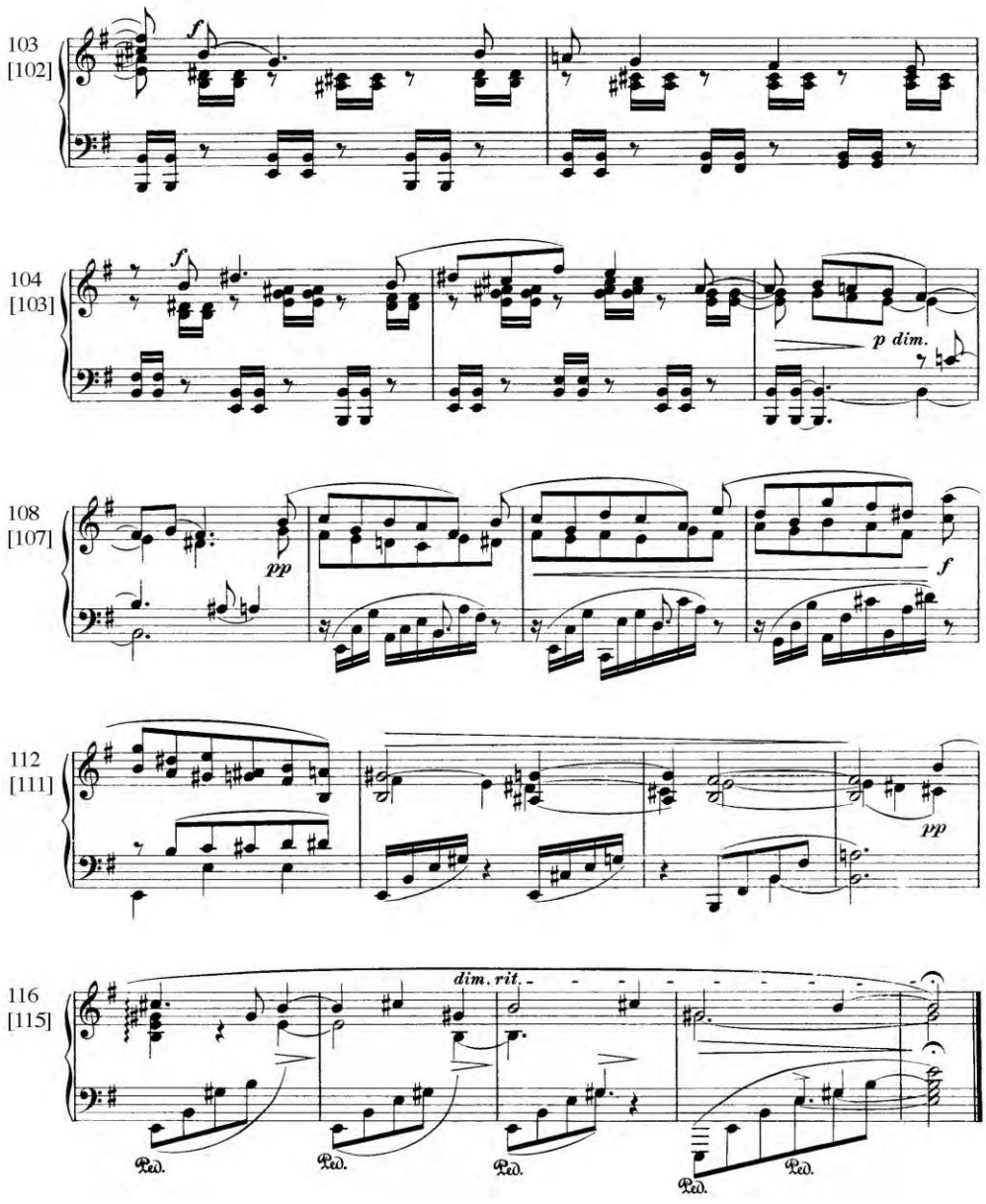
Intermezzo in E Minor Op. 119/2



Intermezzo in E Minor Op. 119/2



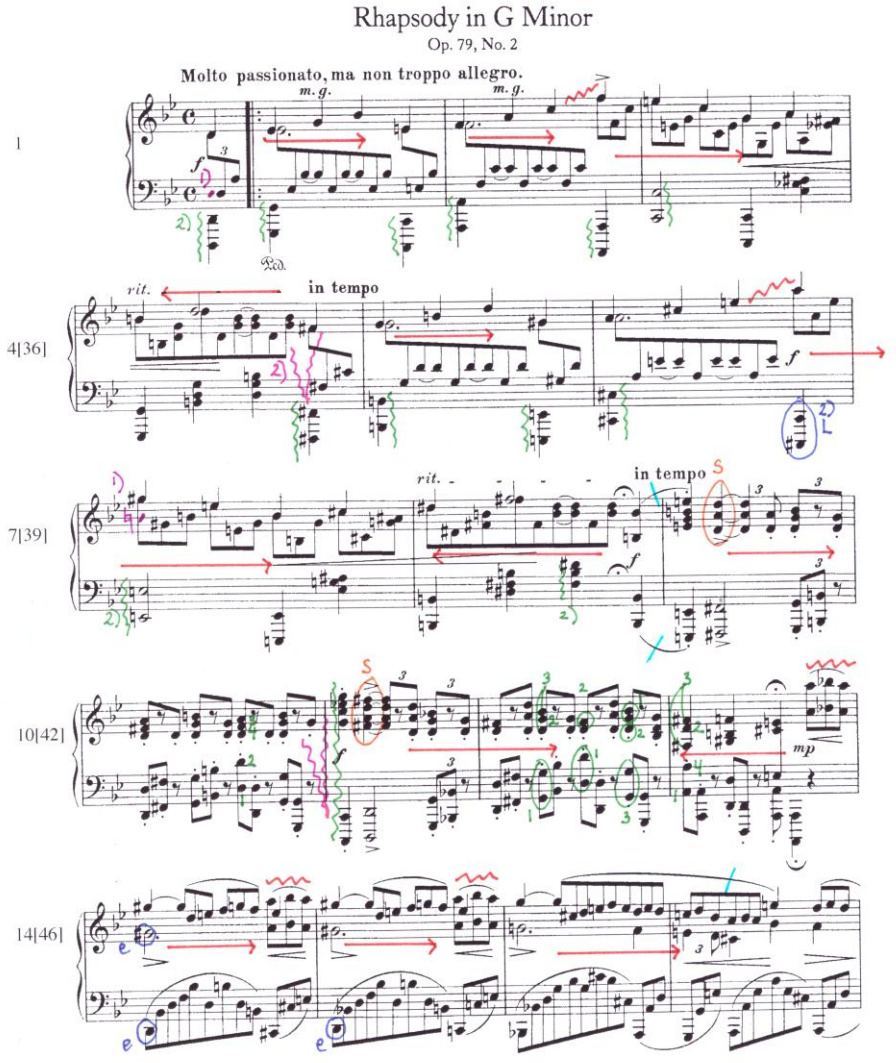
Intermezzo in E Minor Op. 119/2



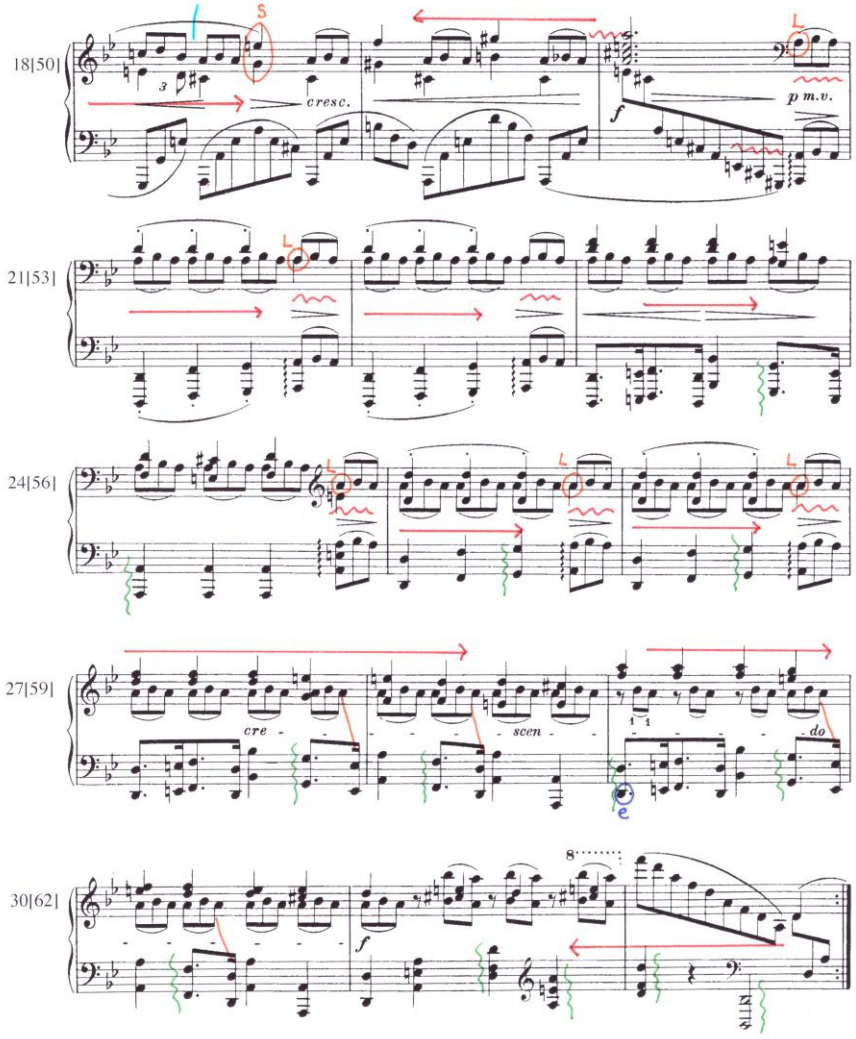
Score Example 5.1.1

Rhapsody in G Minor Op. 79/2

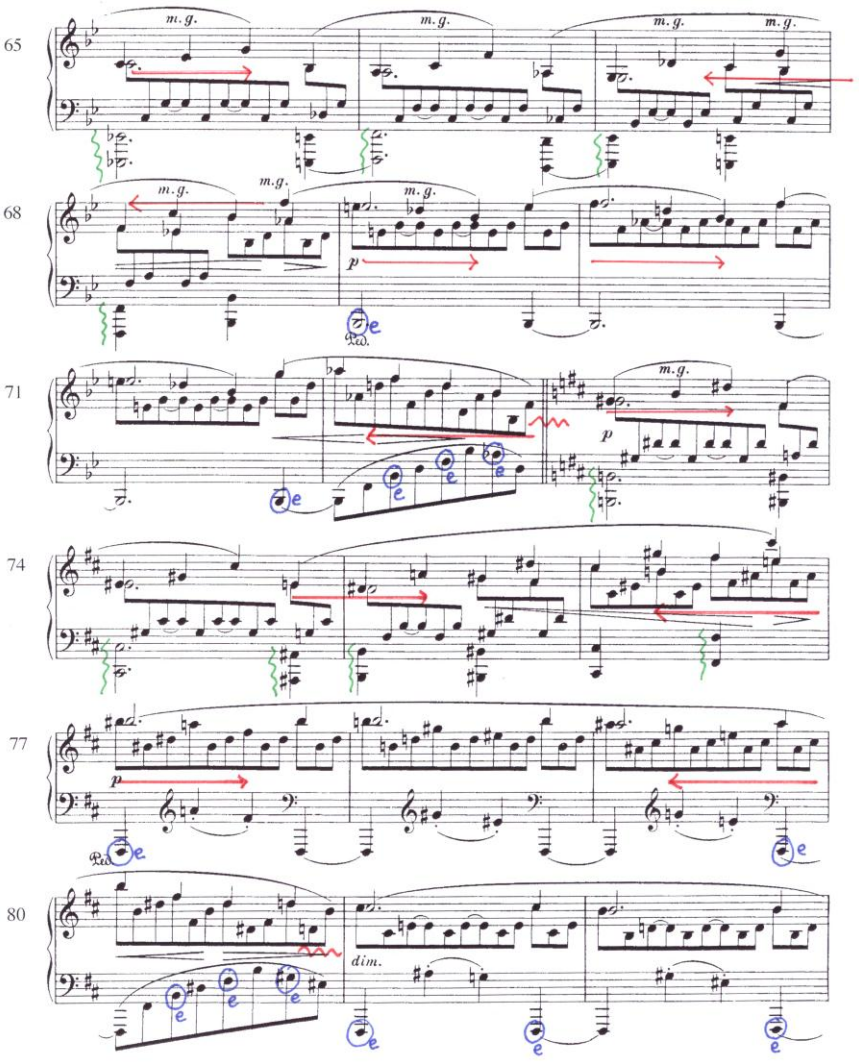
Johannes Brahms, Sämtliche Werke (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-27).

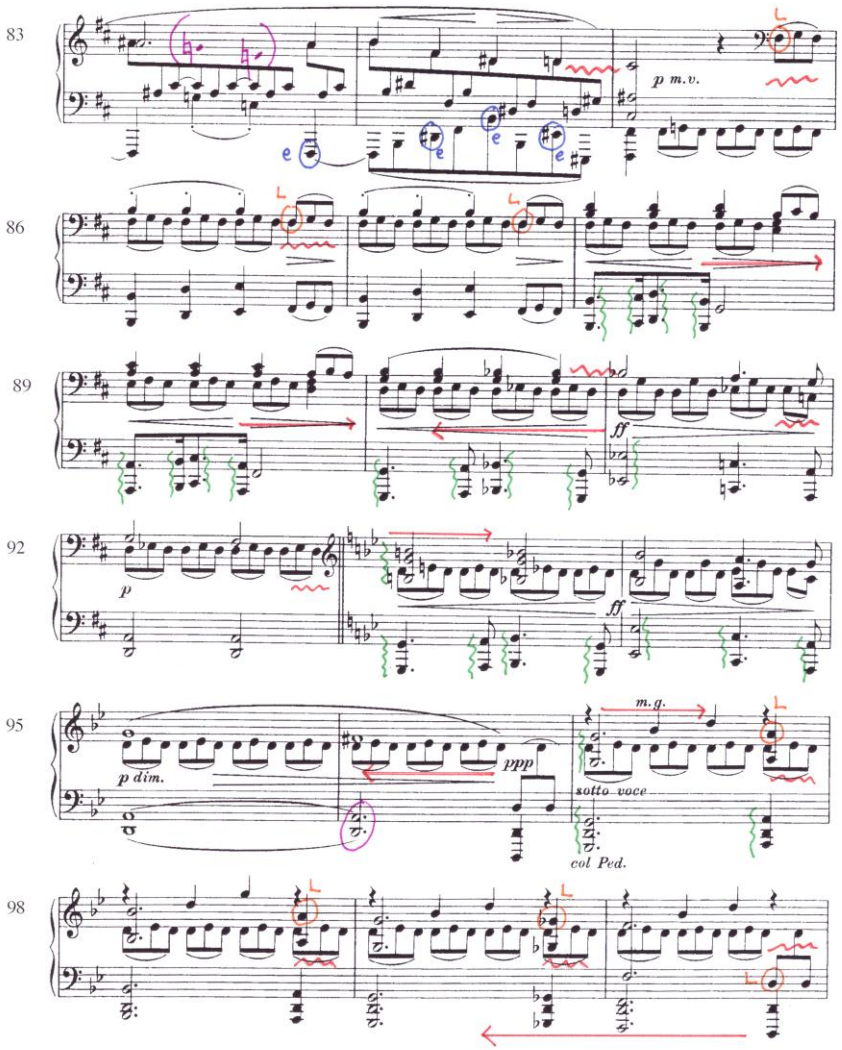


Rhapsody in G Minor Op. 79/2

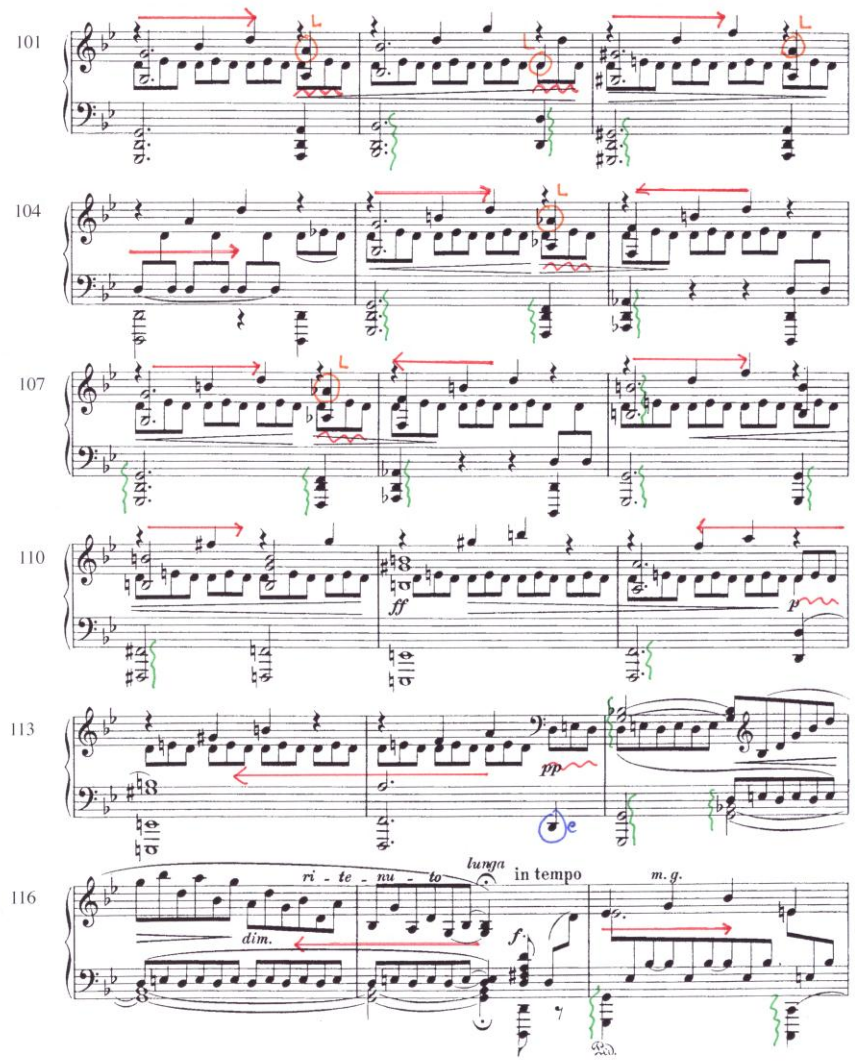


Rhapsody in G Minor Op. 79/2

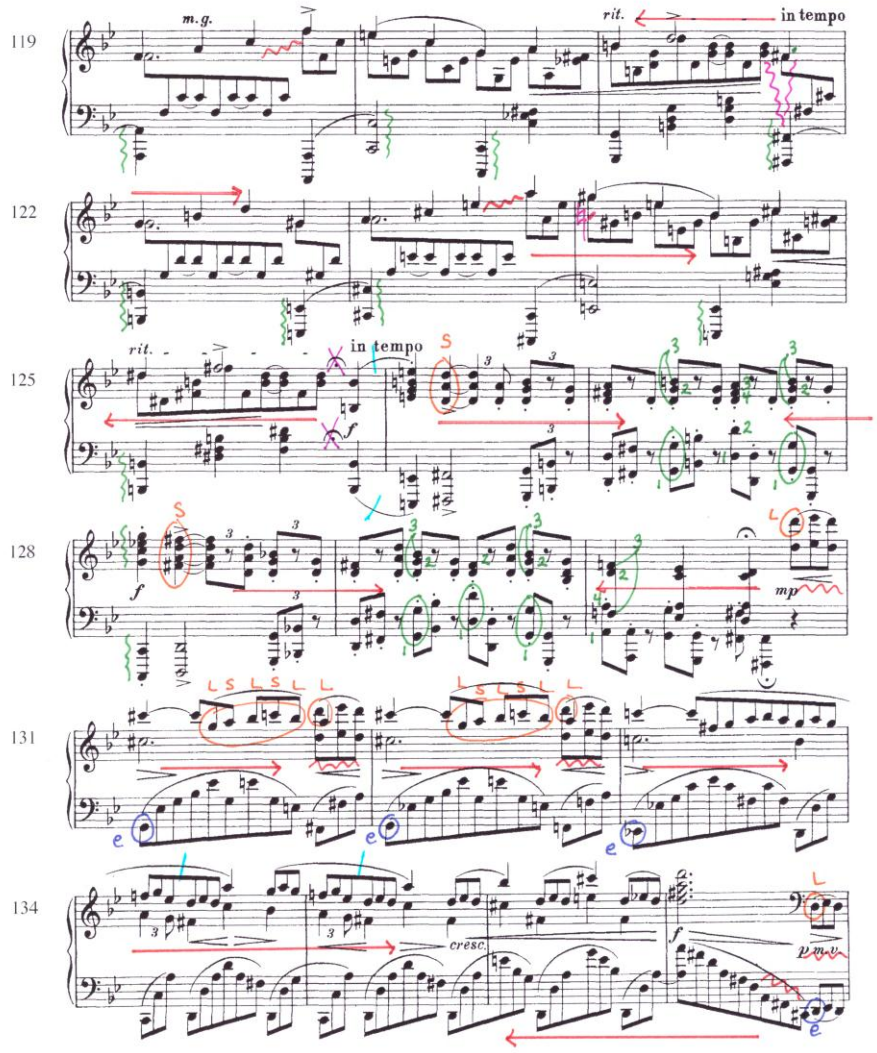



83
p m.v.
86
89
ff
92
p
ff
95
p dim.
ppp
m.g.
sotto voce
col Ped.
98

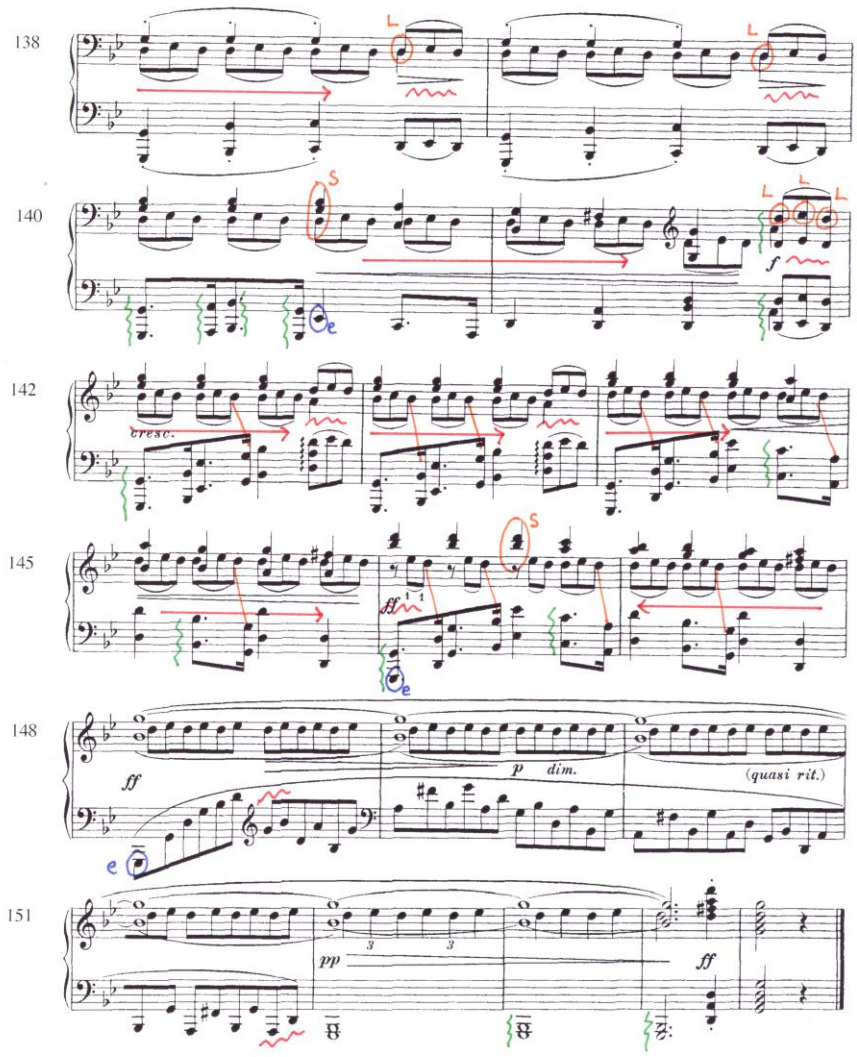
Rhapsody in G Minor Op. 79/2



Rhapsody in G Minor Op. 79/2

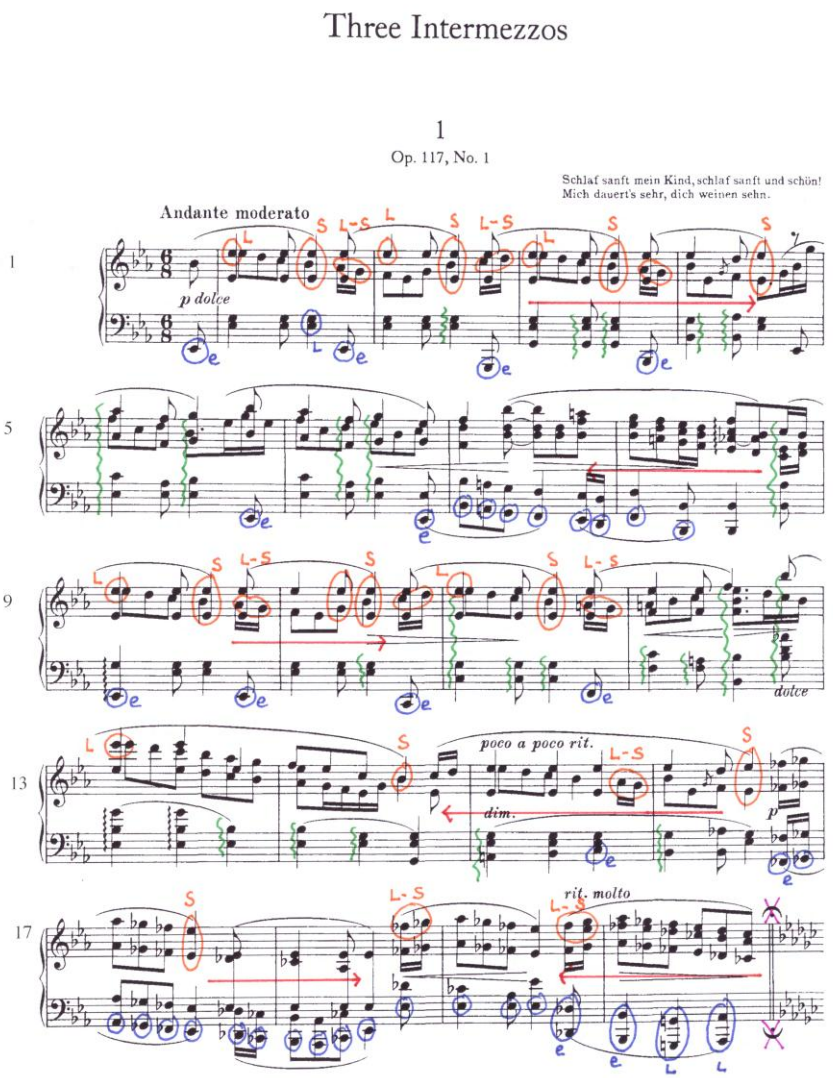


Rhapsody in G Minor Op. 79/2

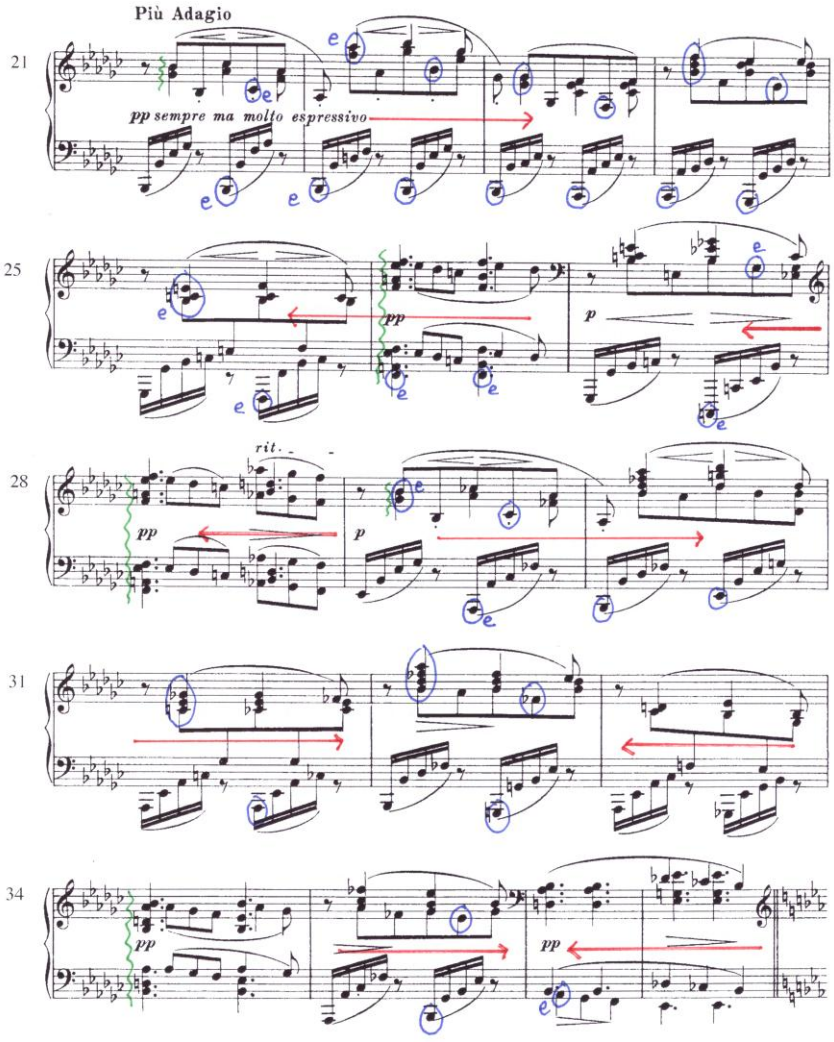


Score Example 5.1.2

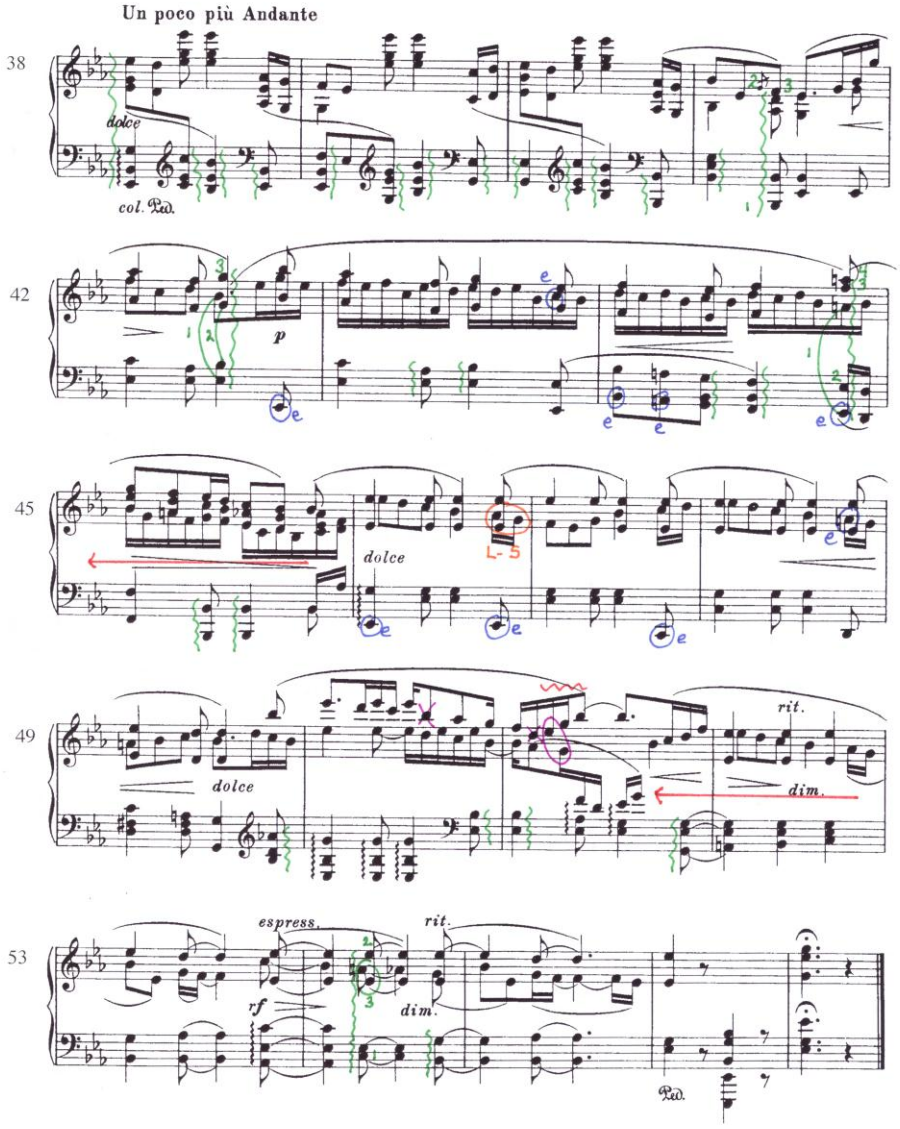
1. Eb Major Op. 117/1 Johannes Brahms, Sämtliche Werke (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-27).



1. Eb Major Op. 117/1



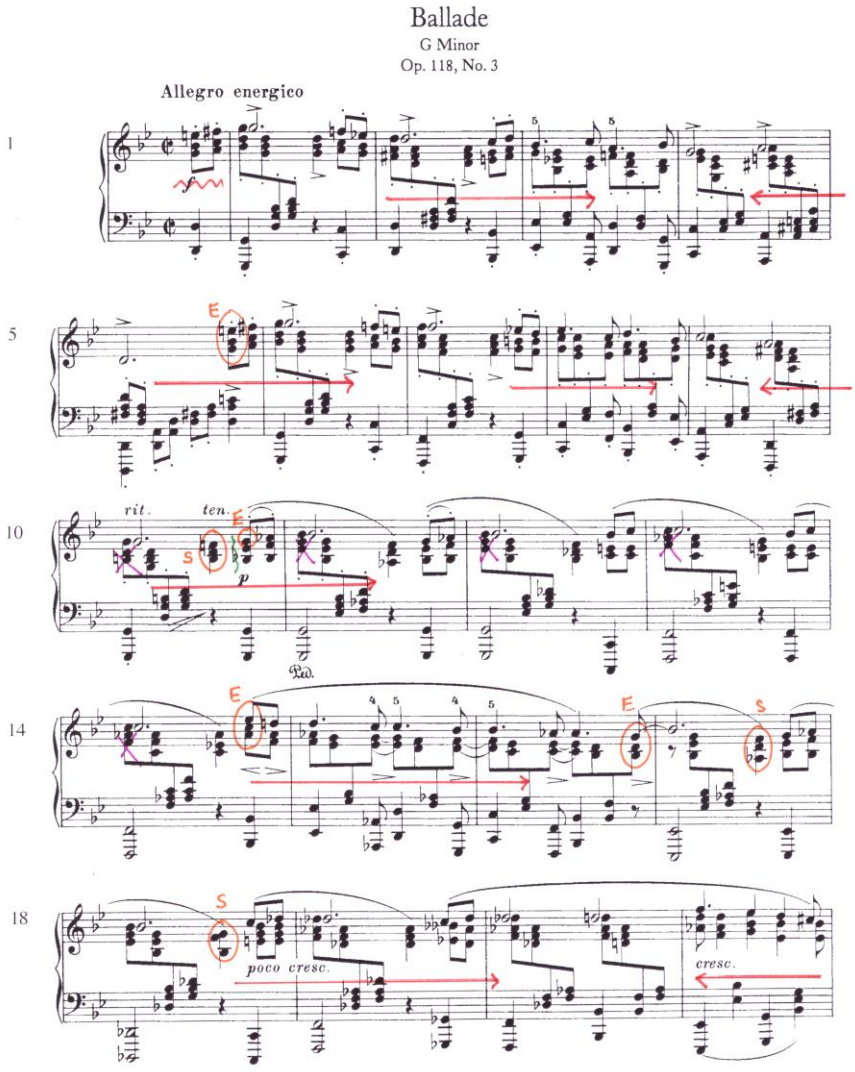
1. Eb Major Op. 117/1



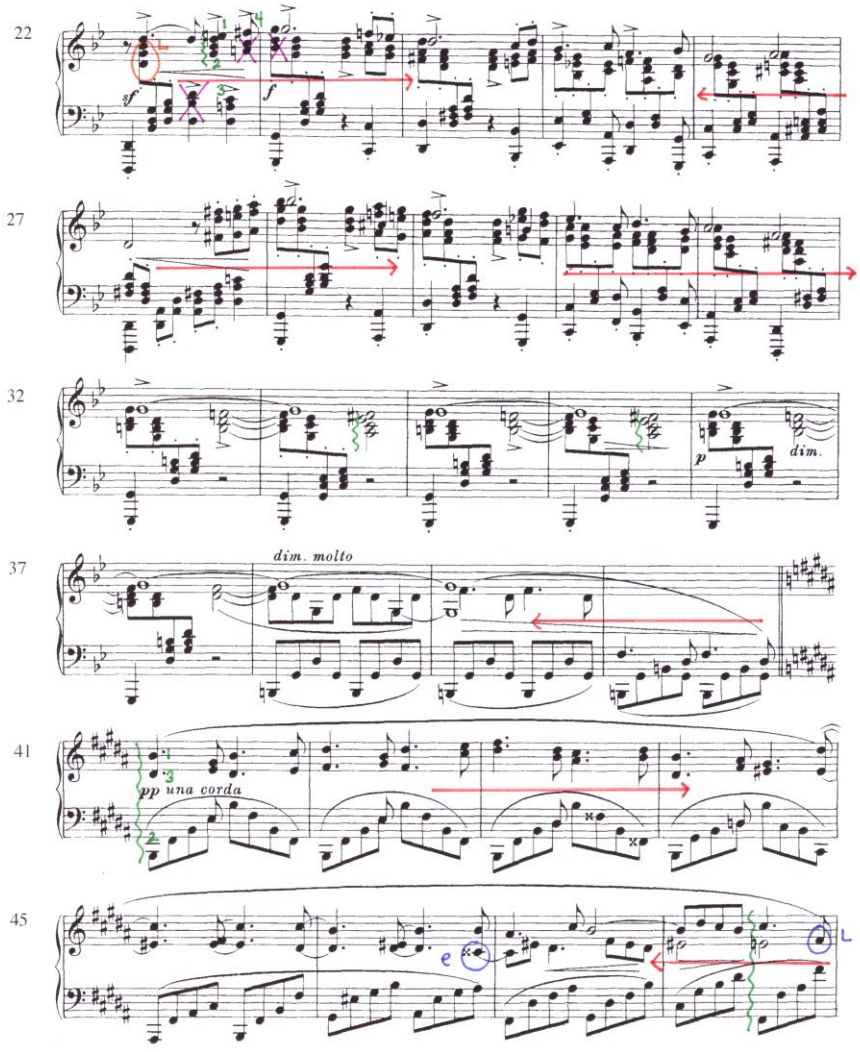
Score Example 5.1.3

3. Ballade, G Minor Op. 118/3

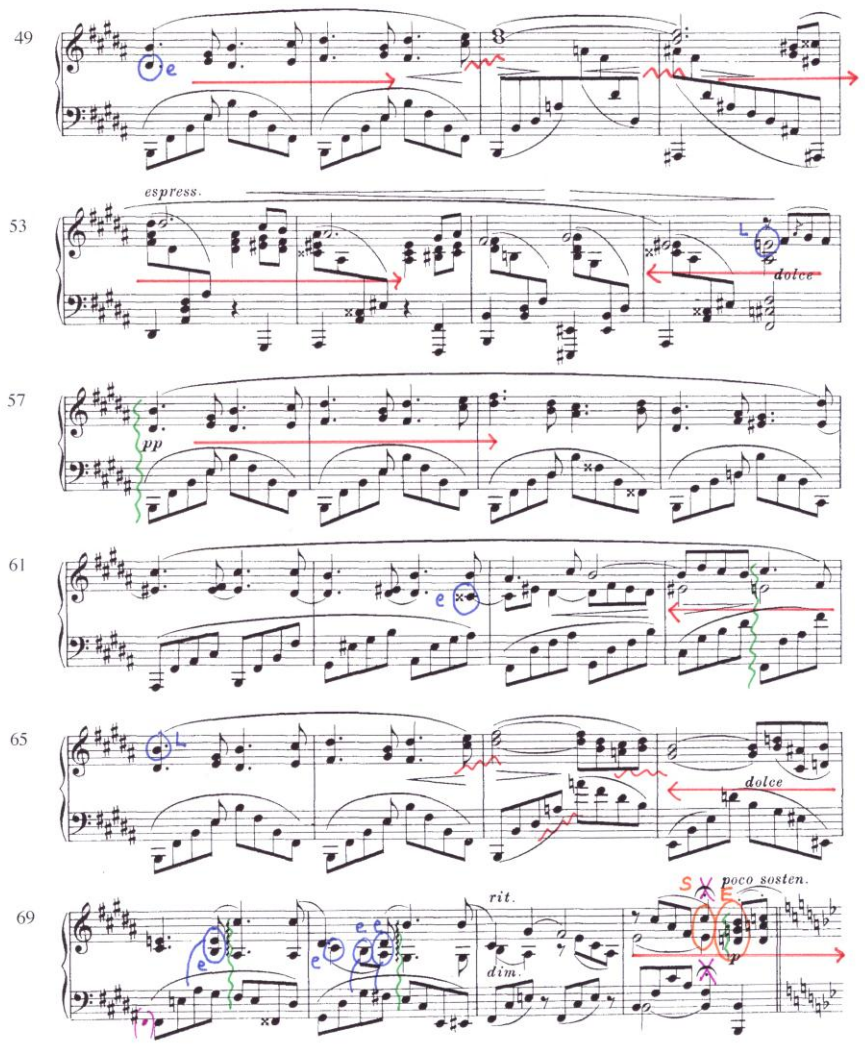
Johannes Brahms, Sämtliche Werke (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-27).



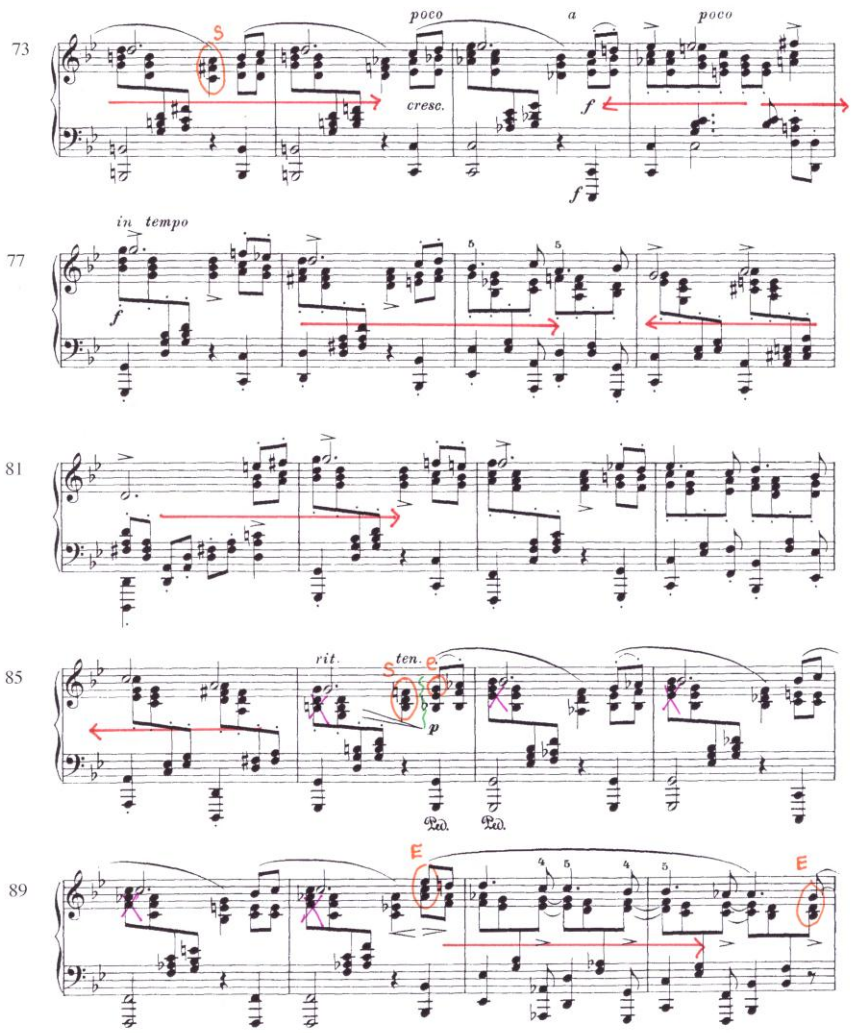
3. Ballade, G Minor Op. 118/3



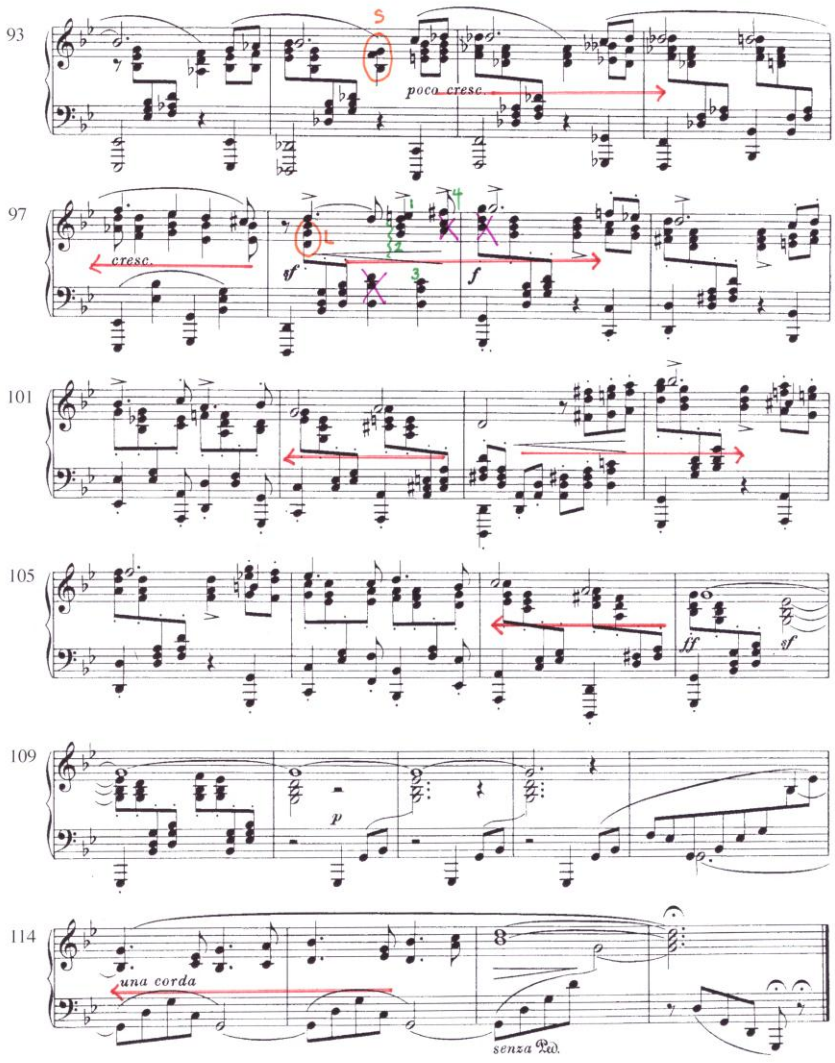
3. Ballade, G Minor Op. 118/3



3. Ballade, G Minor Op. 118/3

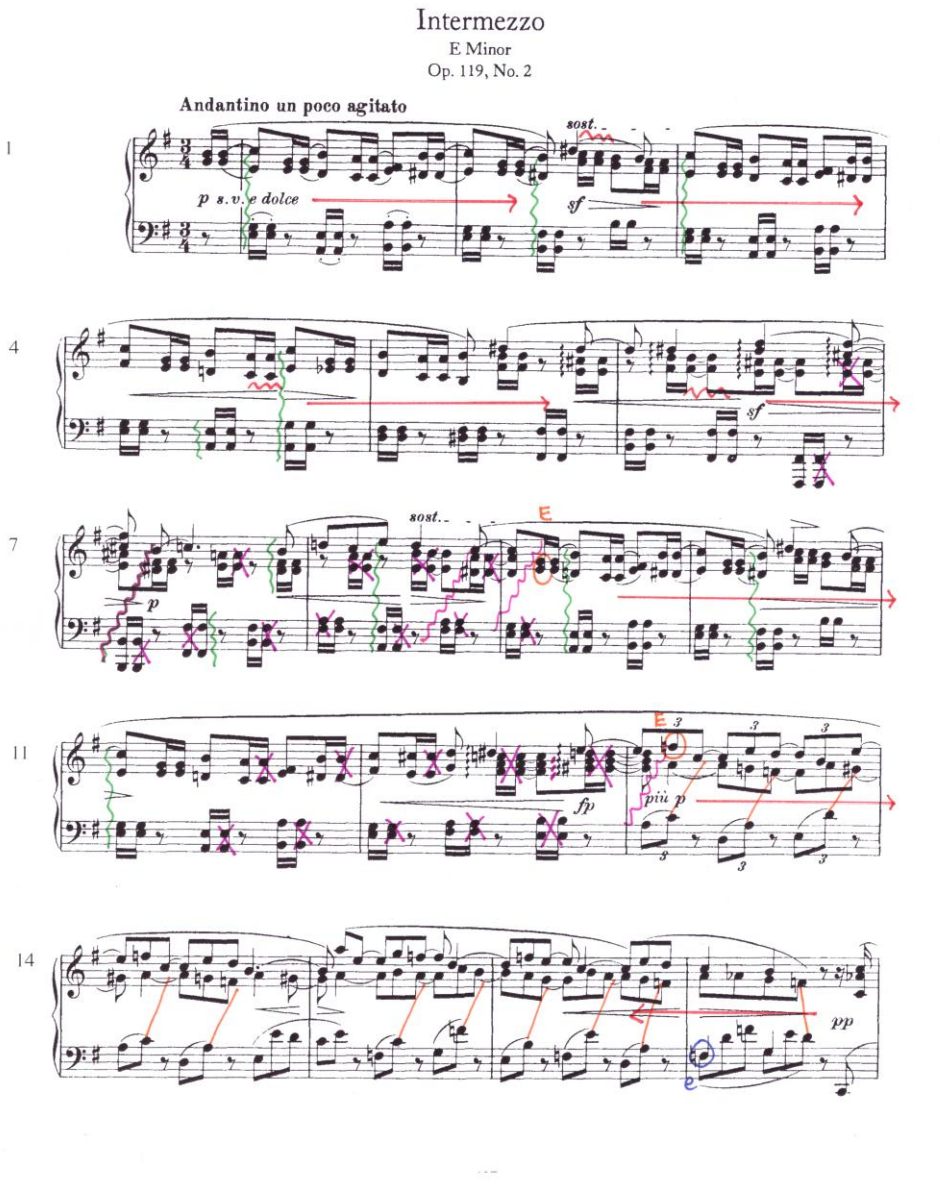


3. Ballade, G Minor Op. 118/3

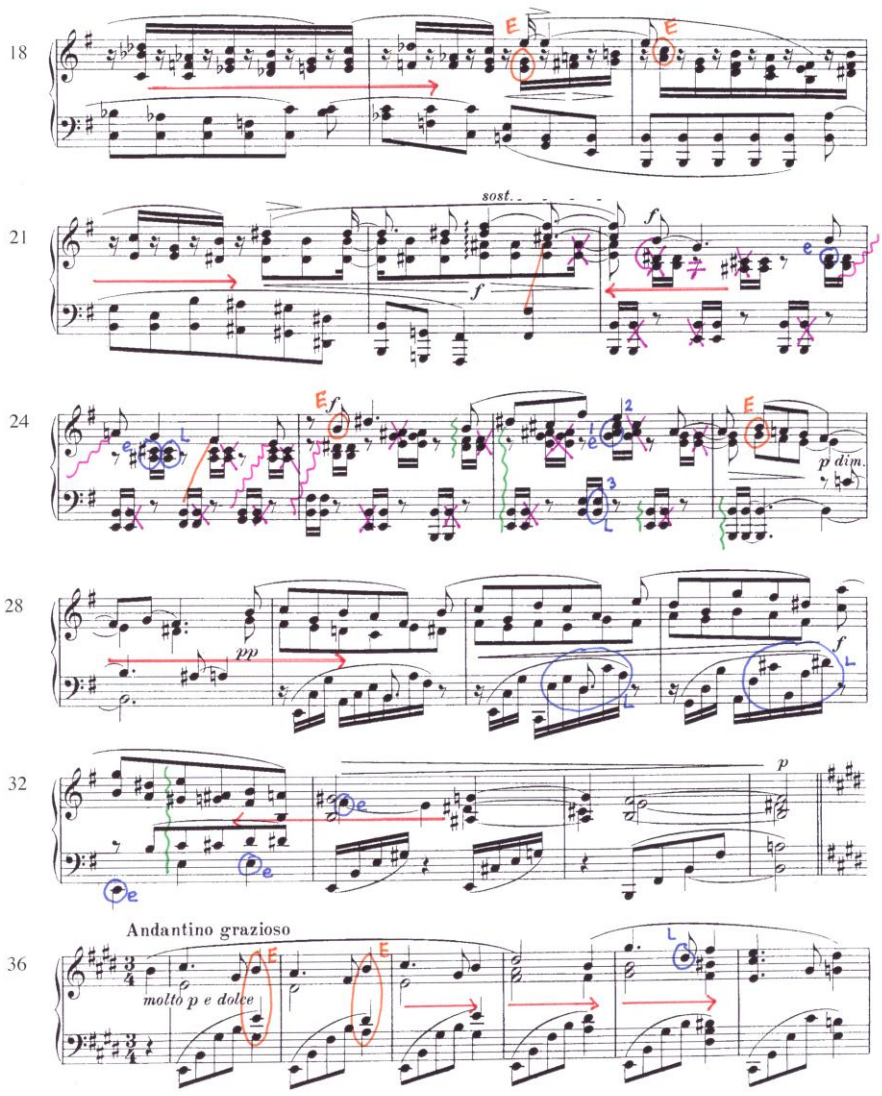


Score Example 5.1.4

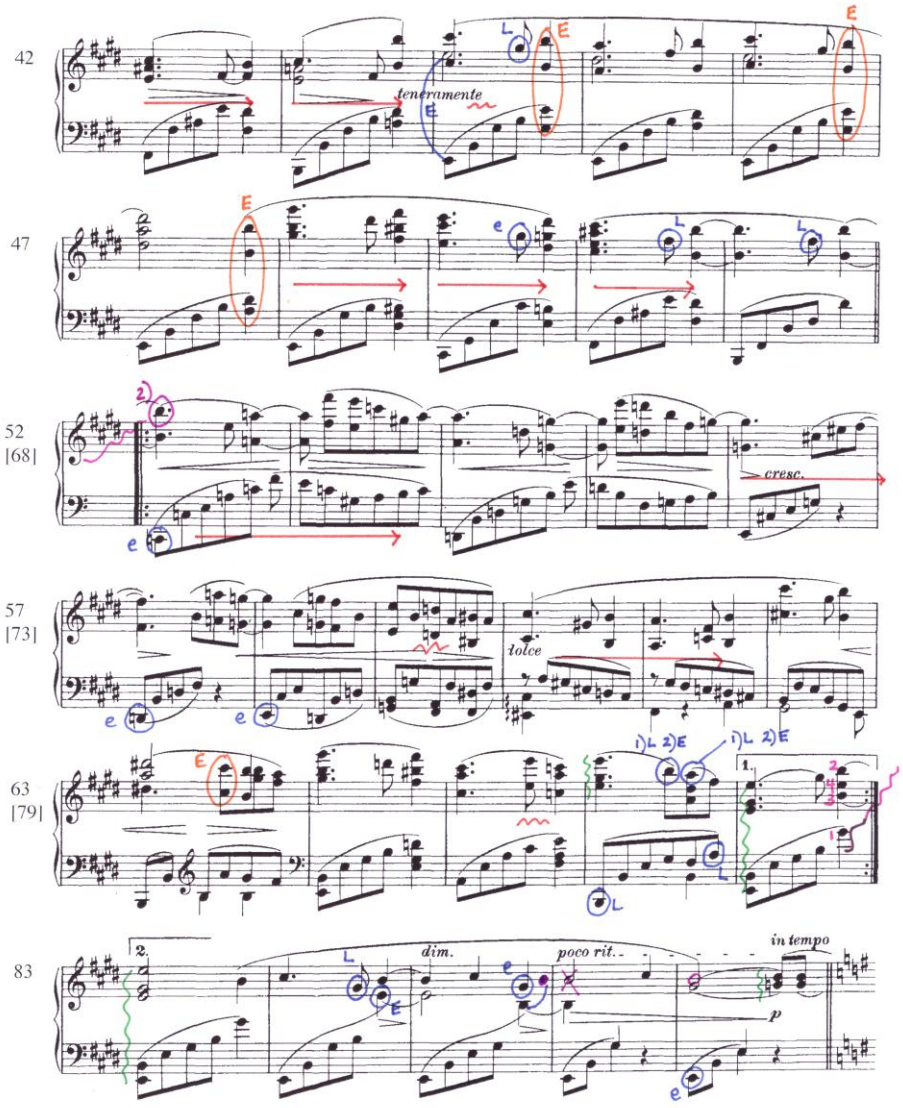
2. Intermezzo, E Minor Op. 119/2 Johannes Brahms, Sämtliche Werke (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-27).



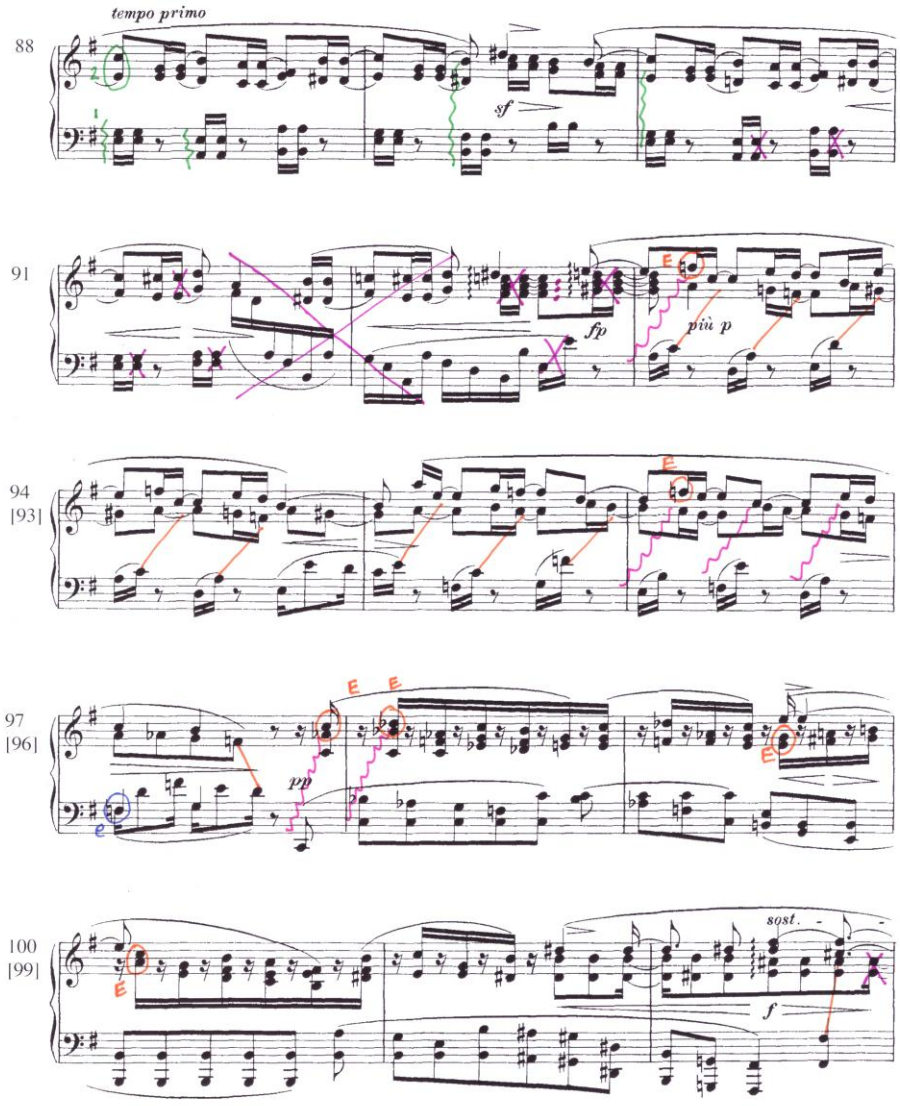
2. Intermezzo, E Minor Op. 119/2



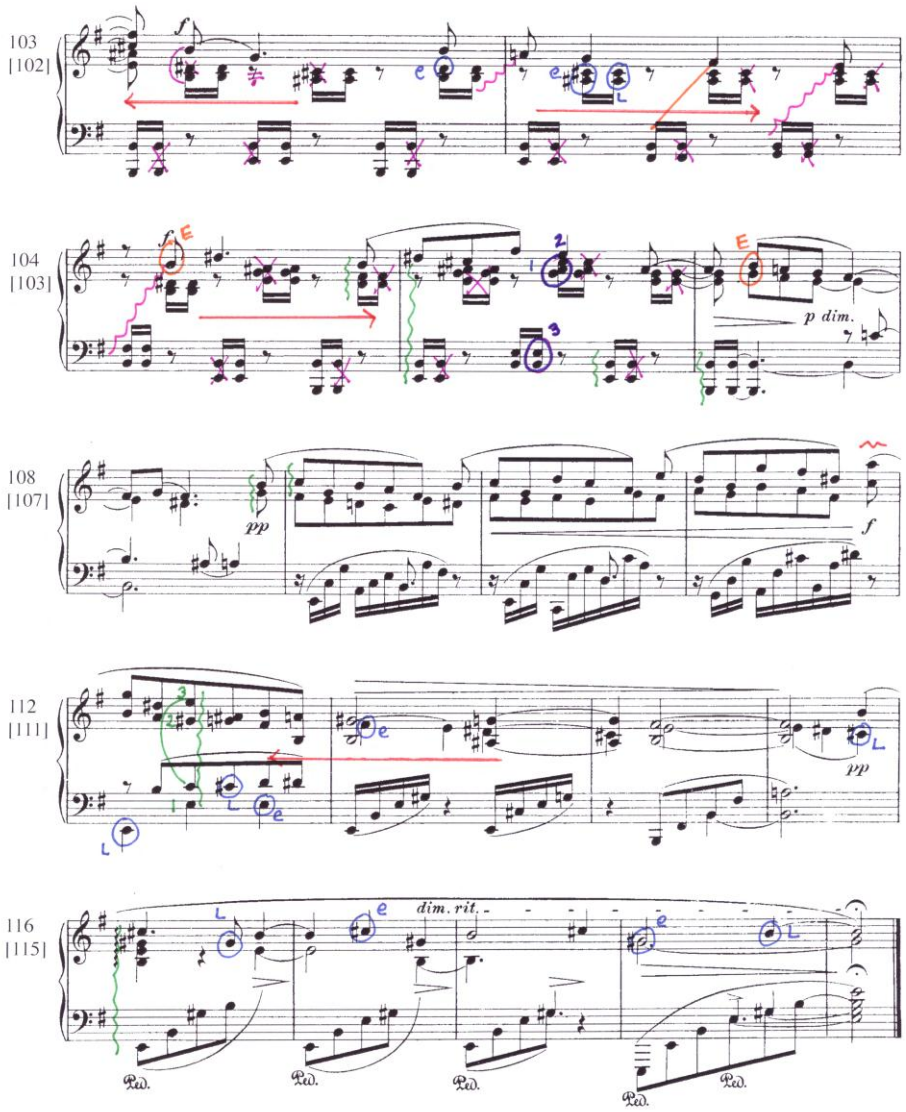
2. Intermezzo, E Minor Op. 119/2



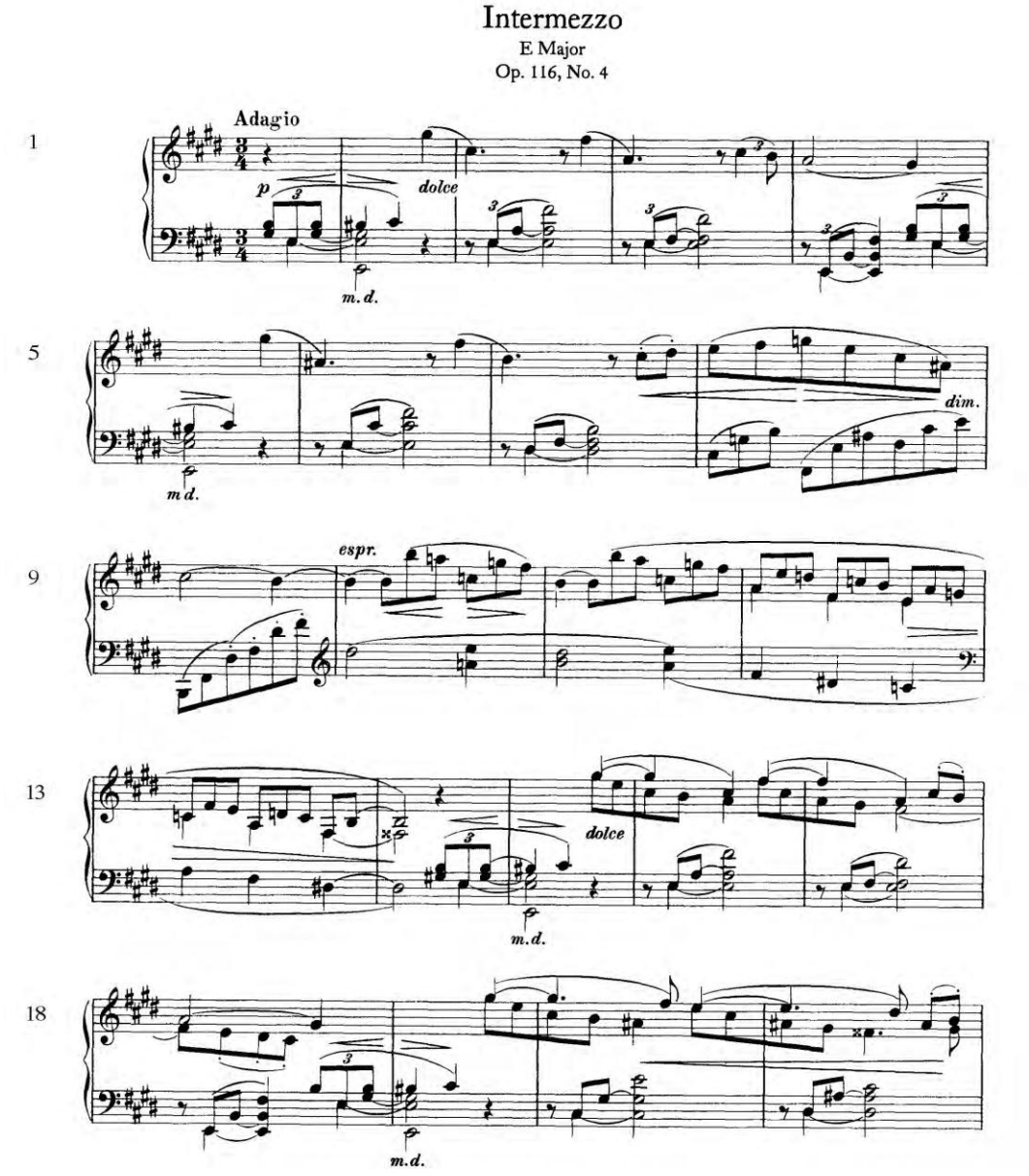
2. Intermezzo, E Minor Op. 119/2



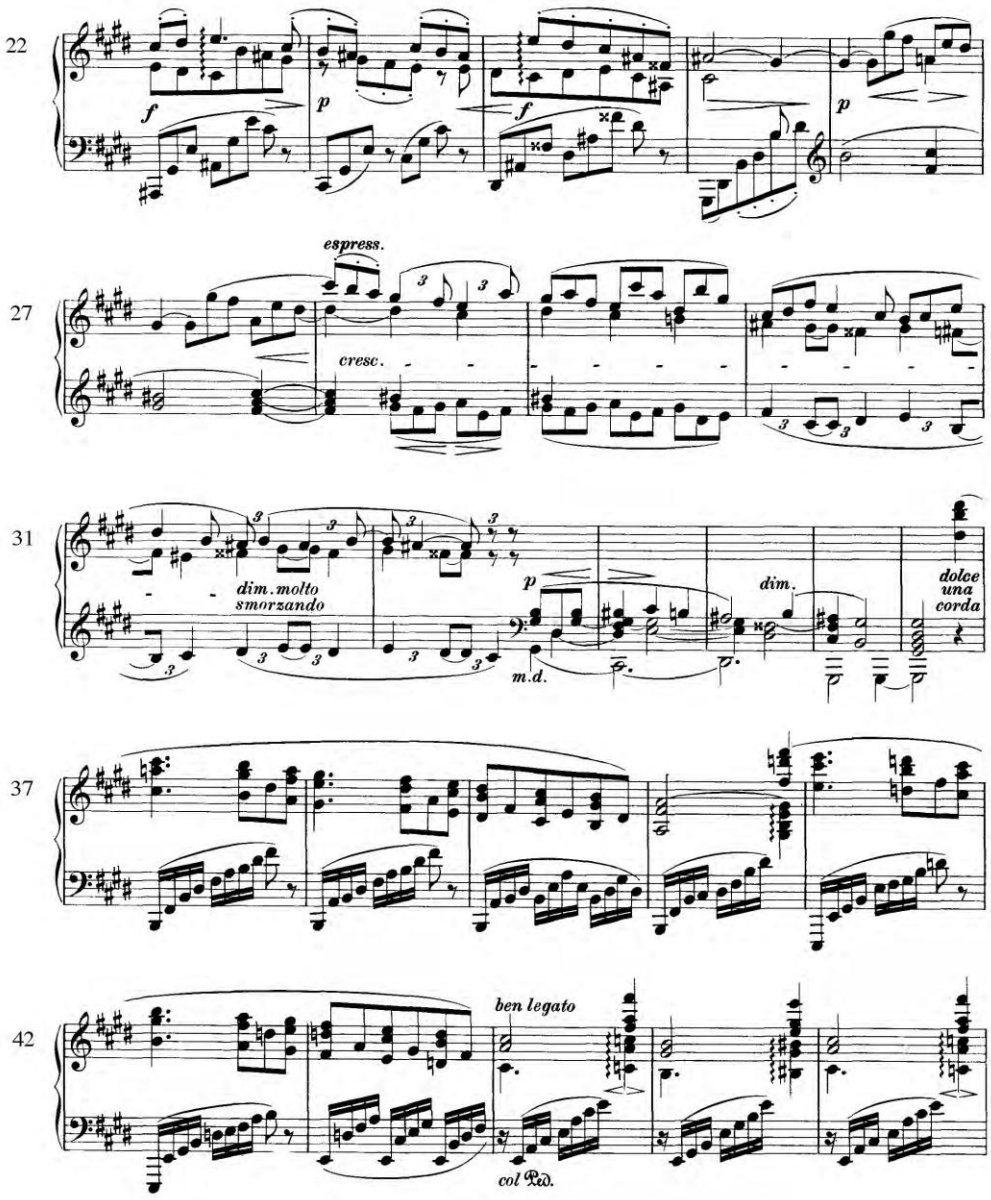
2. Intermezzo, E Minor Op. 119/2



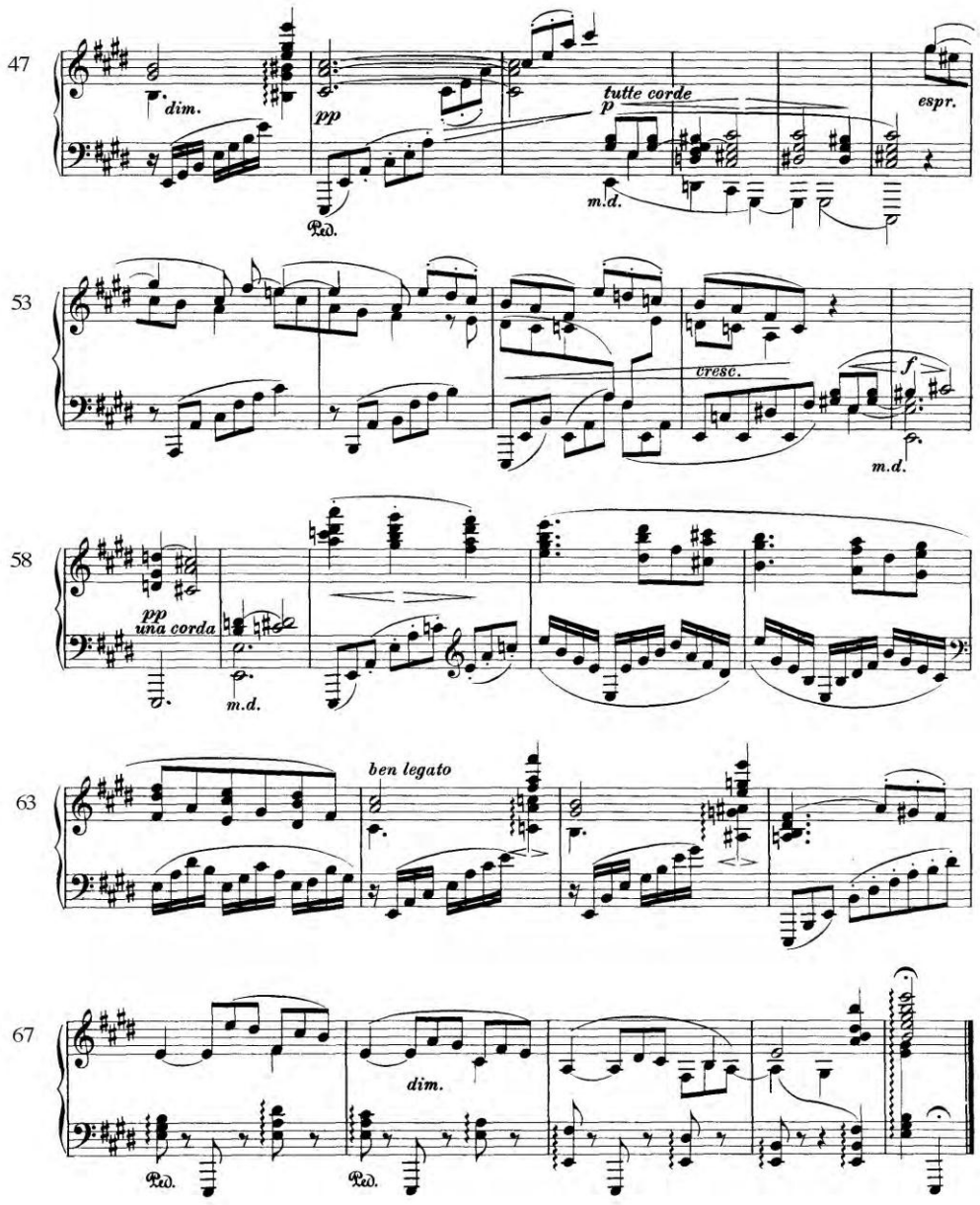
Score Example 5.2.1a



Intermezzo in E Major Op. 116/4



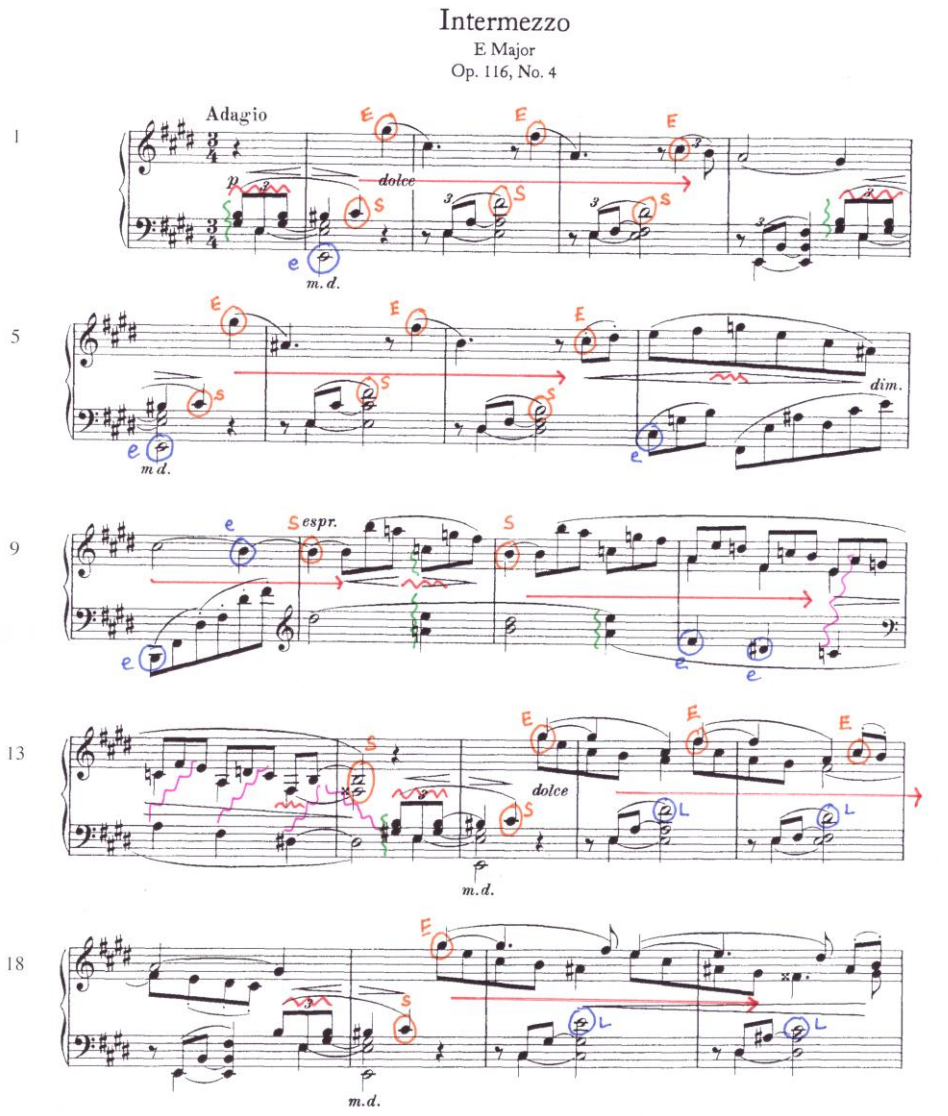
Intermezzo in E Major Op. 116/4



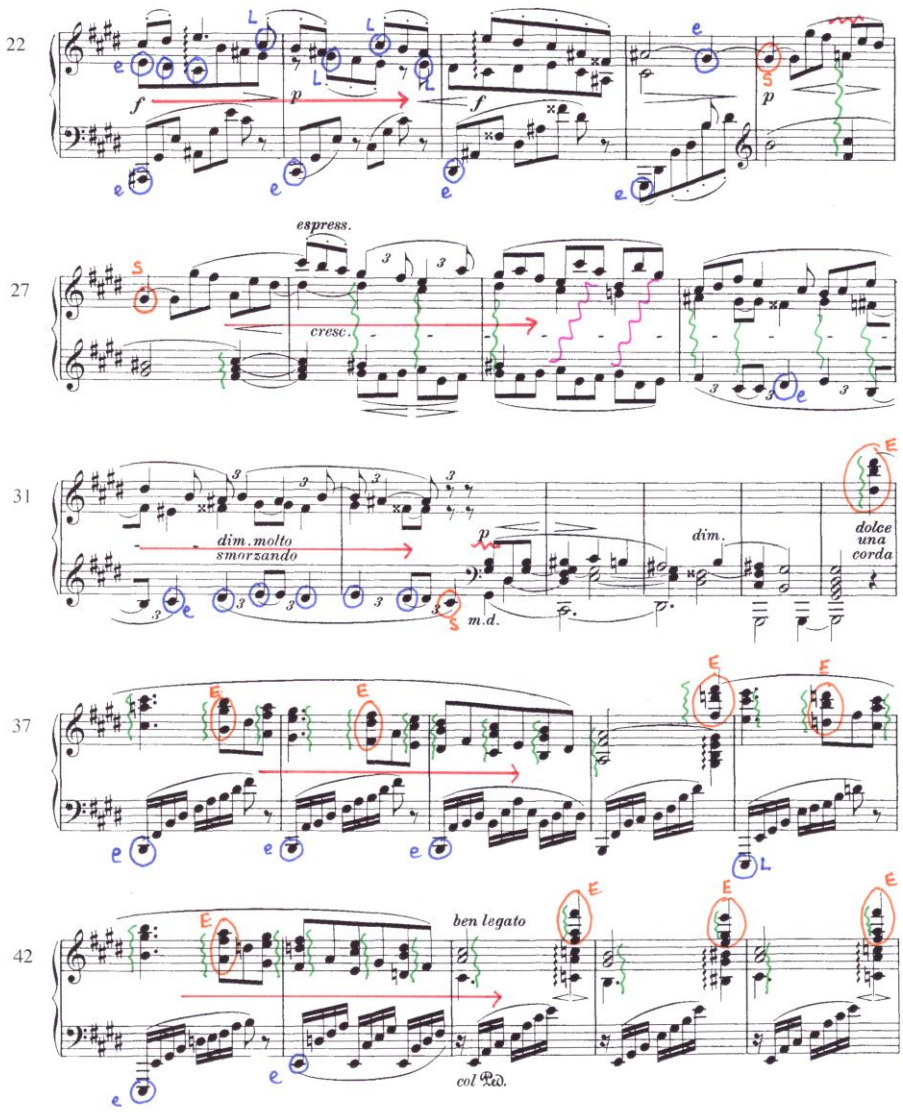
Score Example 5.2.1b

4. Intermezzo, E Major Op. 116/4

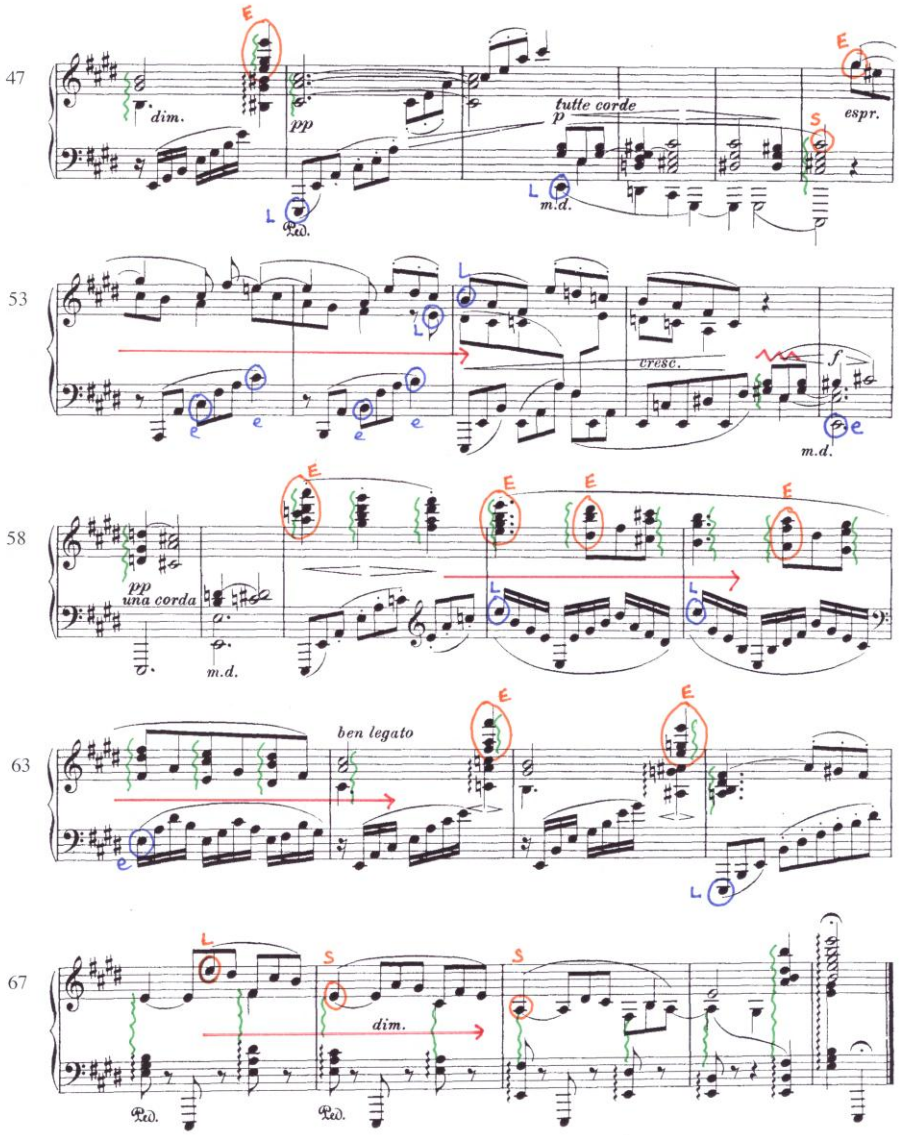
Johannes Brahms, Sämtliche Werke (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-27).



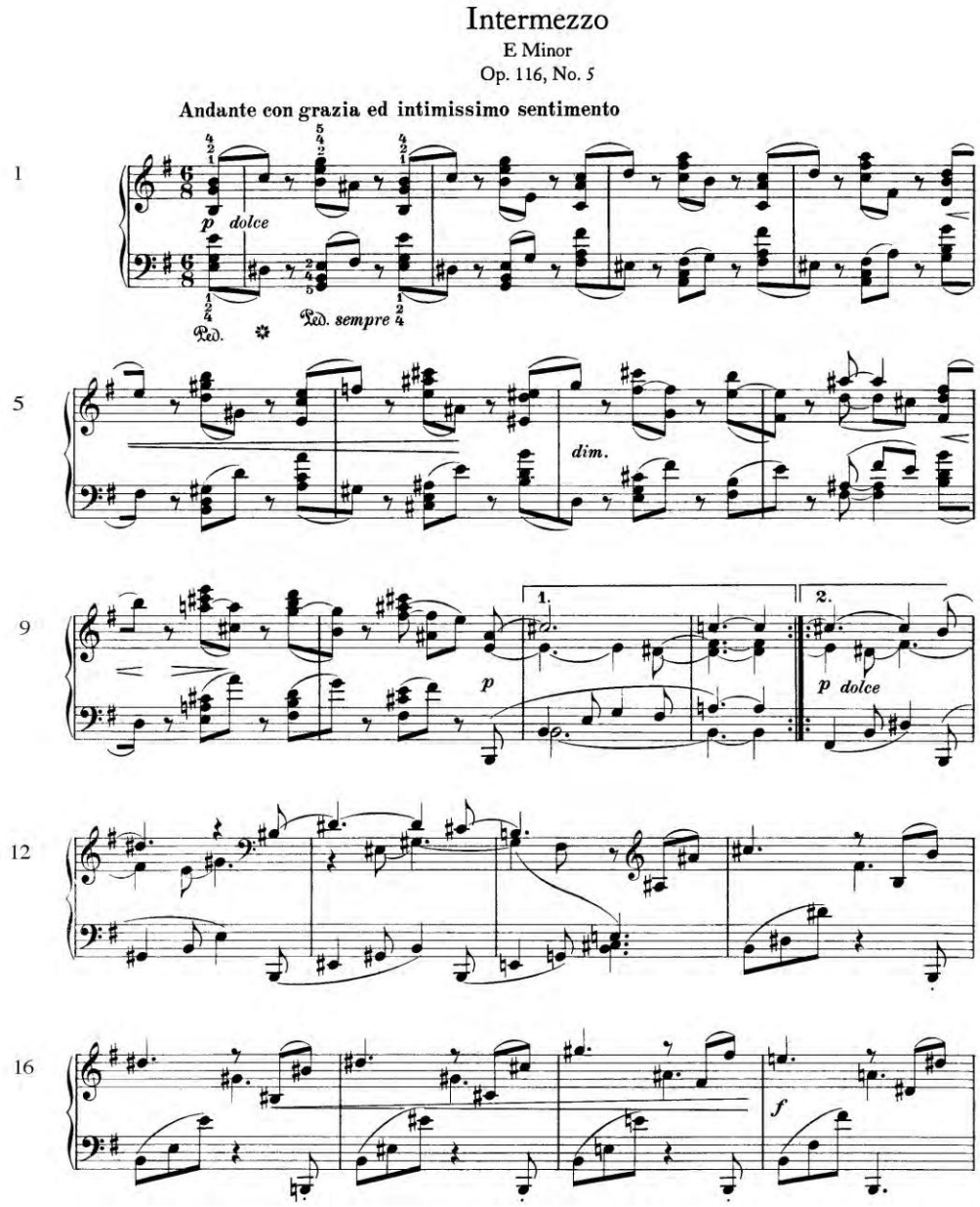
4. Intermezzo, E Major Op. 116/4



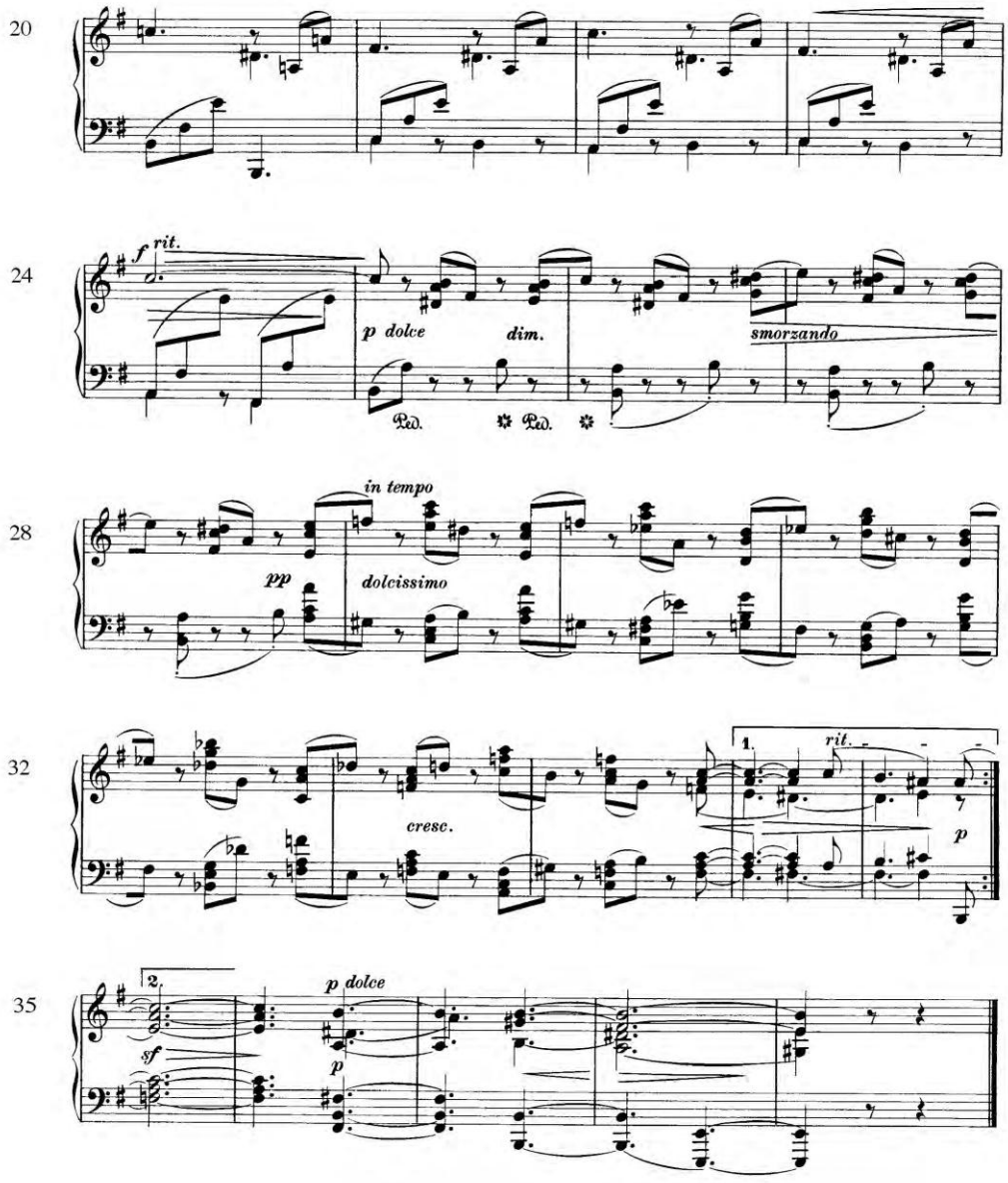
4. Intermezzo, E Major Op. 116/4



Score Example 5.2.2a



Intermezzo in E Minor Op. 116/5

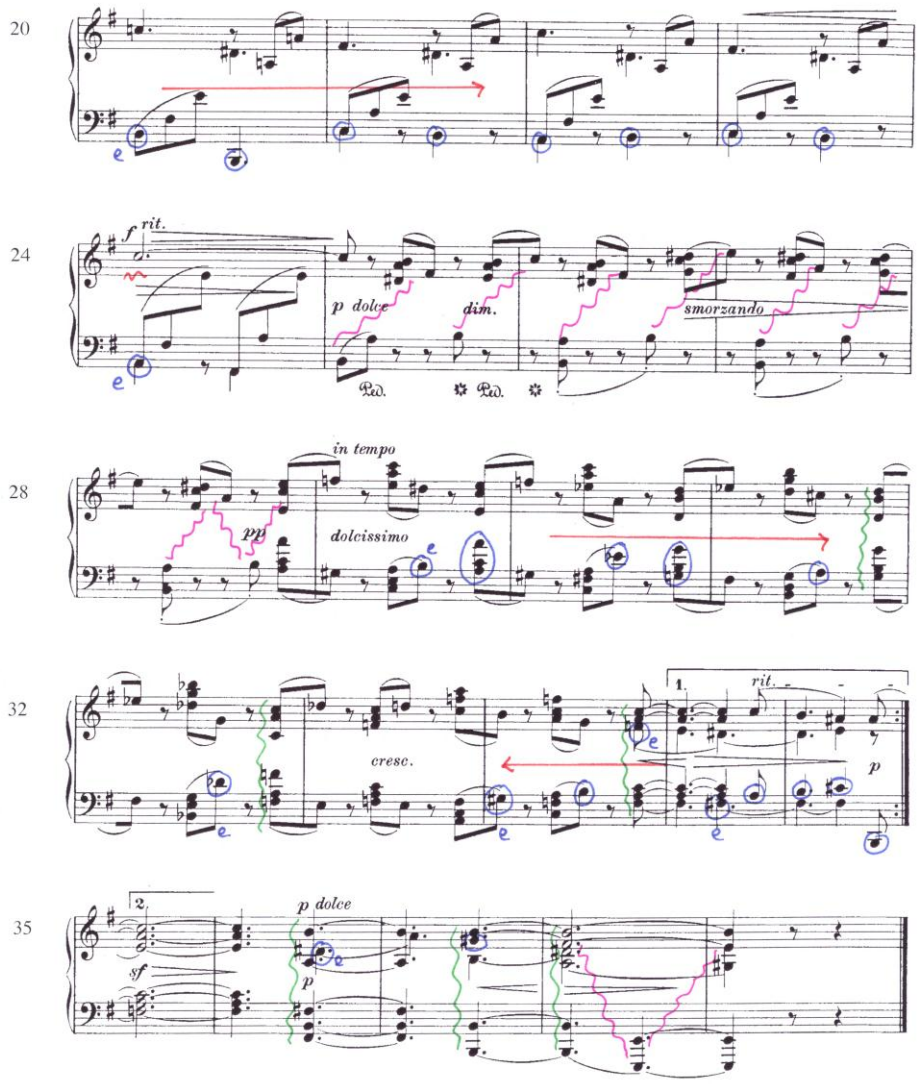


Score Example 5.2.2b

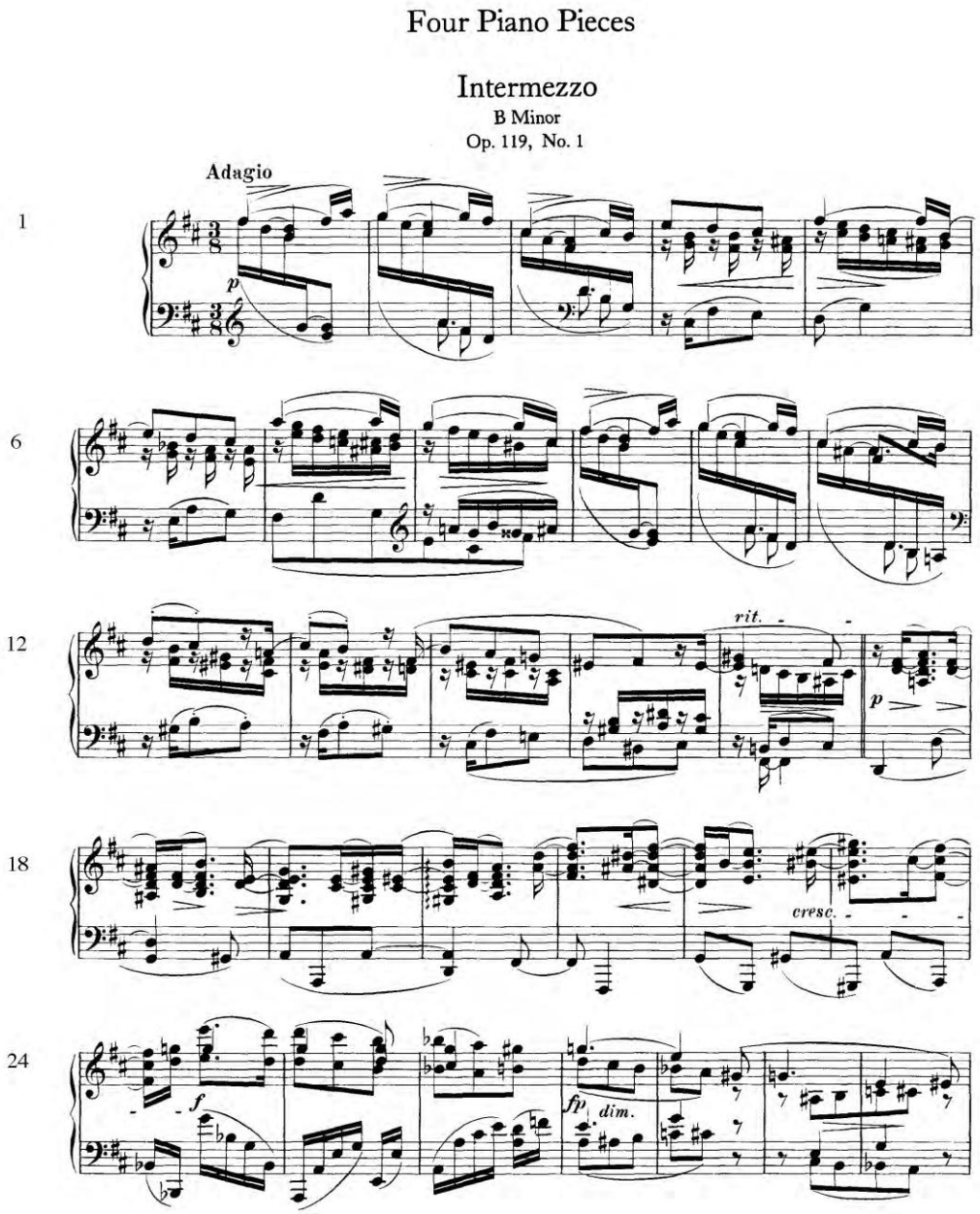
5. Intermezzo, E Minor Op. 116/5

Johannes Brahms, Sämtliche Werke (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-27).

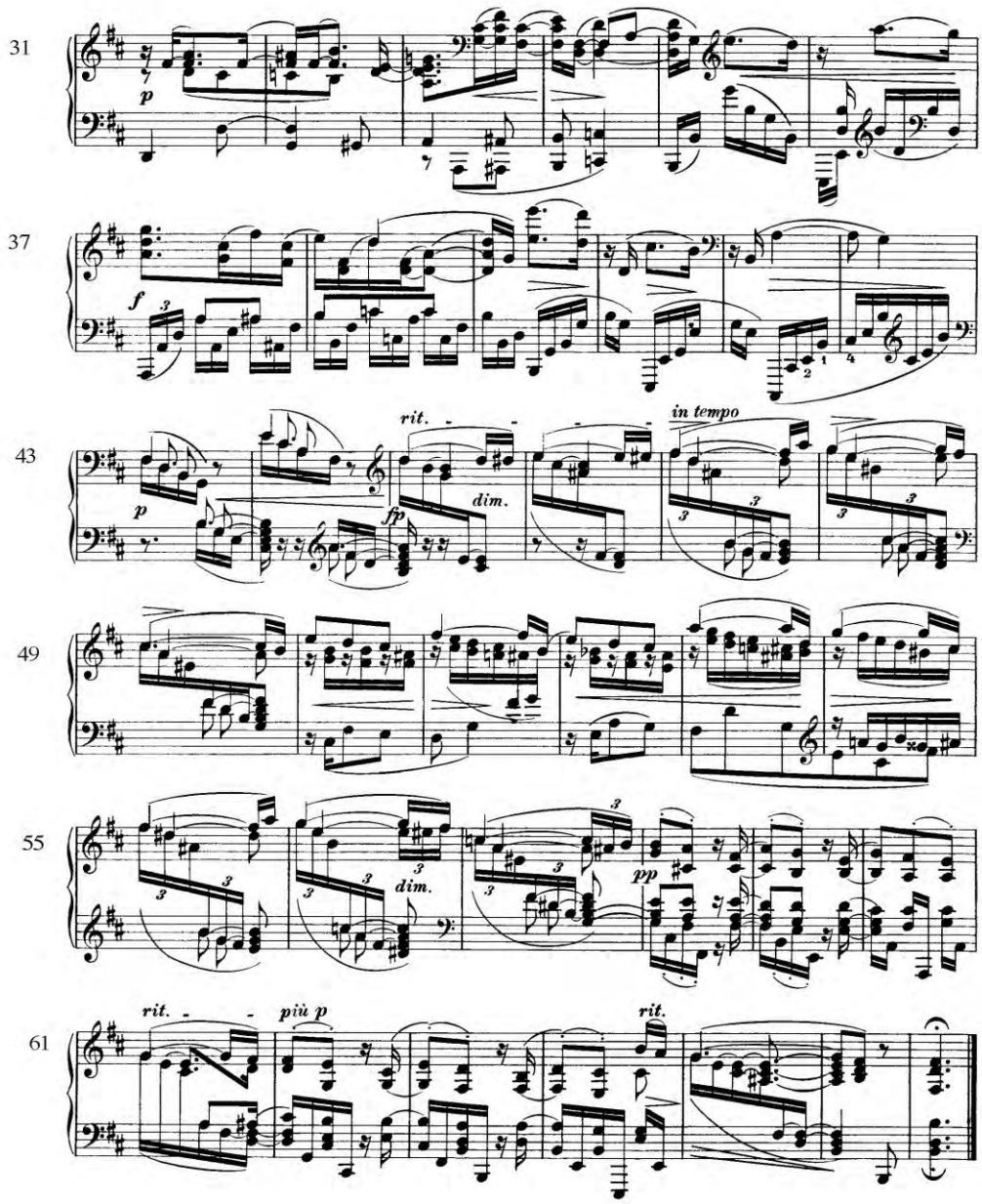
5. Intermezzo, E Minor Op. 116/5



Score Example 5.2.3a



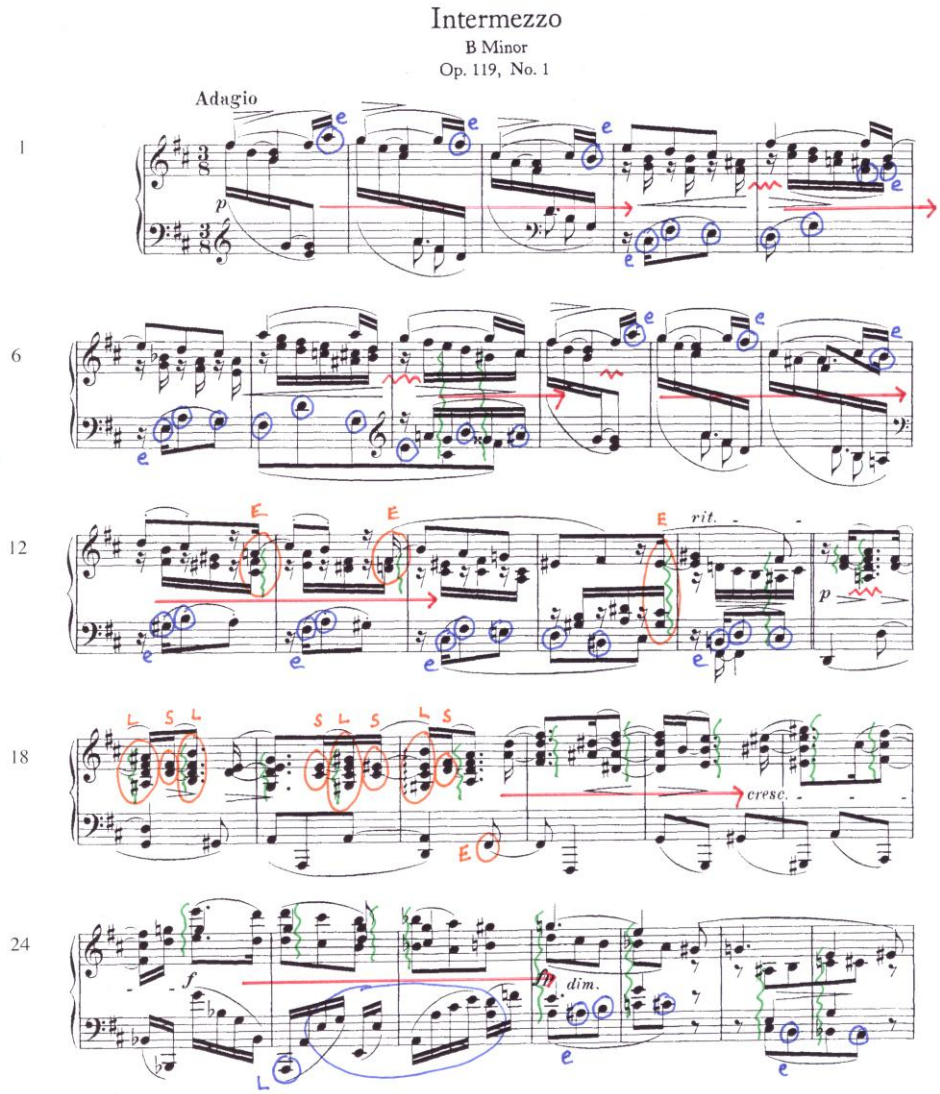
Intermezzo in B Minor Op. 119/1



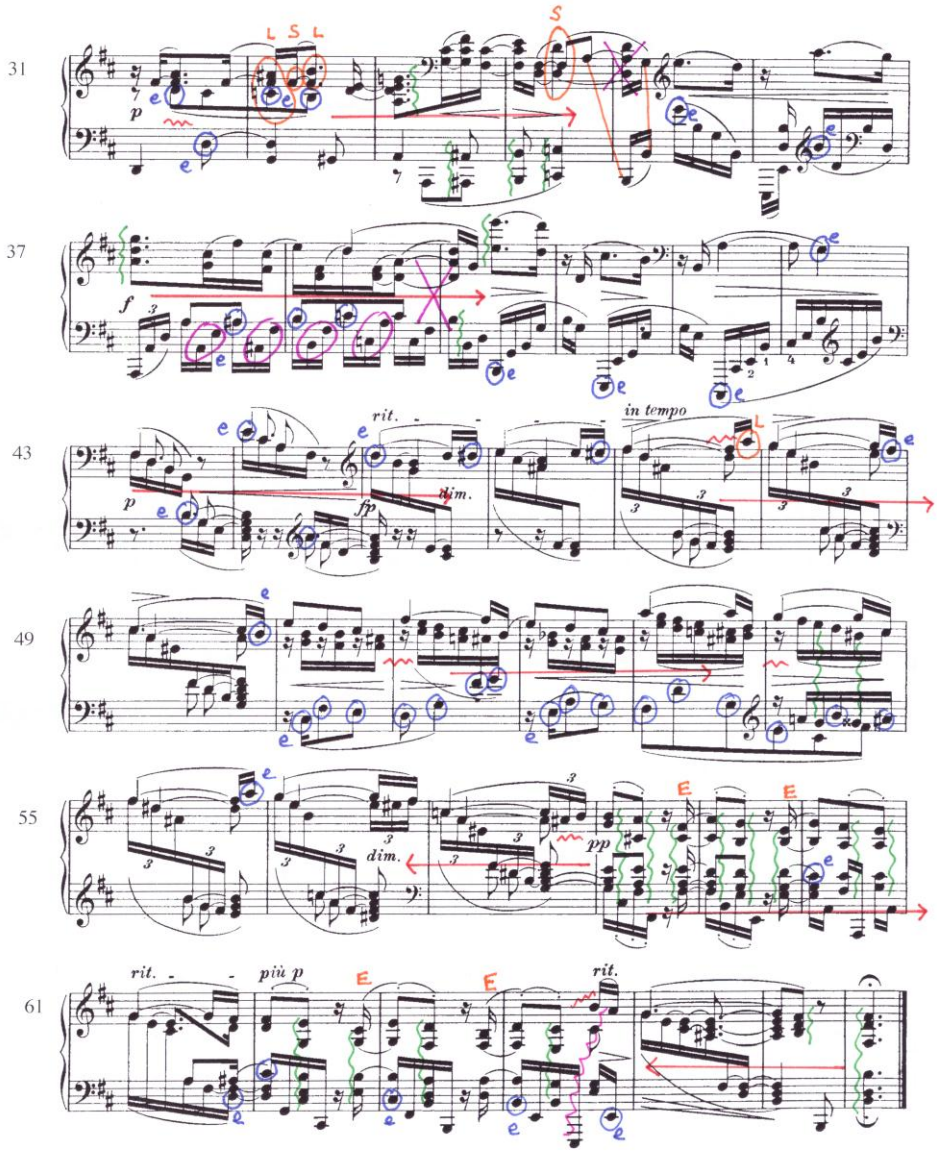
Score Example 5.2.3b

1. Intermezzo, B Minor Op. 119/1

Johannes Brahms, Sämtliche Werke (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-27).



1. Intermezzo, B Minor Op. 119/1



Abstracts

Though they are generally regarded as invaluable traces of late-Romantic style, early twentieth-century recordings make for uncomfortable bedfellows with modern norms for the performance of certain nineteenth-century repertoires and the canonic identities protected by those norms. Nowhere is this truer than in Brahmsian spheres, where the version of Johannes Brahms communicated by the recordings of the Schumann-Brahms circle of pianists stands in stark contrast to constructions of his 'Classical' identity and its underlying aesthetic ideology of control. Just as Brahms's controlled mind and body are understood to rescue him from the excesses and debilities of his Romantic milieu, so too are modern Brahmsian pianists fetishized as elite performers whose sober treatment of musical detail, time and structure is understood to distance them from their more overtly sentimental and emptily virtuosic peers. This predication of Brahmsian identity on restraint however, leaves the pianists of the Schumann-Brahms circle in a precarious situation: their early recordings of Brahms's late piano pieces evidence an approach to detail, time and structure that is governed by the corporeal and psychological conundrums typically associated with Romanticism. While the chasm between these pianists' performances and modern Brahms style is often explained by changing tastes and standards, it is the author's contention that this gap is mediated by the aesthetic ideology of control, and enforced by a nearly immovable set of associated performance norms. As nothing is allowed to intrude into modern performances of Brahms's piano music that threatens understandings of his controlled identity, neither mainstream, historically-inspired, nor recordings-inspired Brahms sounds anything like Brahms as he was recorded by those who knew him, despite most pianists' dual claims of historical curiosity and creative agency.

This volume and its associated performances seek to problematize Brahmsian identity: by investigating the origins of the aesthetic ideology of control and the modes by which it mediates scholarly and performance-based assessments of documentary and sounding evidence of Brahms's musical contexts; by suggesting what Brahms's late piano pieces might 'tell of' beyond narratives designed to buttress understandings of his controlled Classical identity; by analysing and copying the early Brahms recordings of pianists in his inner circle; and by demonstrating how these pianists' styles can be experimentally applied in ways that are *at least* as disruptive to modern notions of Brahmsian identity as their early-recorded models. It is found that when approaching evidence of Brahms's musical contexts with a view to problematizing rather than reinforcing current understandings of his identity, a style of performance emerges that is indeed ruled by the corporeal and psychological risks, tantrums and rhapsodies typically associated with Romantic pianism. This shift in understanding as related to Brahms's identity then opens up a palette of expressive and technical resources that are currently suppressed by the mores of modern Brahms style: resources that, when applied experimentally, are shown to both narrow and further elucidate the gaps between contemporary and early-recorded Brahms style, while also offering a tantalizing reconciliation between the Scylla and Charybdis of historical sympathy and creative agency in modern Brahms performance spheres.

Hoewel opnames uit het begin van de 20e eeuw doorgaans worden beschouwd als waardevolle sporendragers van de uitvoeringsstijl van de laatromantische periode, zijn ze moeilijk te rijmen met de huidige normen voor het uitvoeren van bepaald 19e-eeuws repertoire, en met de identiteit van de uitvoeringscanons die door die normen beschermd worden. Nergens is dit meer het geval dan wanneer men zich in de sfeer van Brahms begeeft, waarin het klinkend resultaat van uitvoeringen van zijn pianomuziek zoals die gecommuniceerd wordt in opnames van pianisten uit de kring rondom Schumann en Brahms sterk contrasteert met zijn zg. klassieke identiteit en de daaronder schuilgaande esthetiek die van *beheersing* bijna een ideologie heeft gemaakt. Die *beheersing* van lichaam en geest zouden hem hebben weggehouden van excessen en zwakheden die eigen waren aan de tijdgeest van de periode waarin Brahms leefde: de Romantiek. Hier zou sprake kunnen zijn van een analogie met hedendaagse top-pianisten die Brahms spelen en wier spel wordt gekenmerkt door een nuchtere benadering van de grote structuur, de grote lijnen en diverse muzikale details, en dat dan tegenover collega's die het moeten hebben van openlijke sentimentaliteit en holle virtuositeit.

Het baseren van Brahms' identiteit op het fenomeen van de *beheersing* brengt de pianisten uit de kring rondom Schumann en Brahms echter in een precaire positie: de opnames die zij in hun tijd maakten van Brahms' late pianocomposities onthullen een aanpak van de grote structuur, van allerlei details en het daarbij omgaan met de tijd die gestuurd lijkt te worden door lichamelijke en geestelijke processen en uitdagingen die doorgaans worden geassocieerd met de Romantiek. Hoewel de kloof tussen de uitvoeringen van deze pianisten en de moderne interpretatiestijl van Brahms vaak wordt uitgelegd als resultaat van veranderende smaken en normen, is de auteur van mening dat deze kloof wordt veroorzaakt door een esthetiek waarin *beheersing* de boventoon voert, en die wordt afgedwongen door de bijna onwrikbare uitvoeringsnormen die daarmee worden geassocieerd: niets mag binnendringen in moderne uitvoeringen van Brahms' pianowerken dat het begrip van zijn *beheerste* identiteit bedreigt. Als gevolg daarvan klinken de mainstream Brahms, de historisch-geïnspireerde Brahms, en de opname-geïnspireerde Brahms in het geheel niet als het opnameresultaat van zijn relevante pianocomposities zoals die zijn vastgelegd door mensen die hem kenden, ondanks het feit dat de meeste hedendaagse pianisten zich beroepen op nieuwsgierigheid naar historische aspecten en op creativiteit.

Deze dissertatie en de daarbij gevoegde opnames van de interpretaties door de auteur proberen Brahms' identiteit te problematiseren. Dit gebeurt door te zoeken naar de oorsprong van de genoemde esthetiek -nl. die waarin *beheersing* leidend is- en de manier waarop deze esthetiek de beoordeling van de tekstuele en klinkende documentatie van Brahms' componeren en geïnterpreteerd worden beïnvloedt. Deze beoordeling is zowel gebaseerd op wetenschappelijke input als op de verworvenheden van de uitvoeringspraktijk. De problematisering vindt eveneens plaats door onderzoek naar de diepere achtergronden van zijn late pianocomposities, een context die verder gaat dan de waarde die gehecht wordt aan verhalen die uitgaan van het klassieke beeld van een componist wiens identiteit volledig gestoeld was in de reeds enkele malen genoemde esthetiek van de *beheersing*. Ook door het analyseren en kopiëren van de vroege Brahms-opnames van pianisten uit zijn persoonlijke kring en door te laten zien hoe hun stijl van

musiceren op experimentele wijze kan worden toegepast op speelwijzen die minstens zo ontregelend zijn voor moderne opvattingen over Brahms' identiteit als hun eerder opgenomen voorbeelden, wordt een belangrijke bijdrage geleverd aan de oordeelsvorming en de daaraan voorafgaande problematisering.

Het blijkt dat er, wanneer de documentatie van Brahms' muzikale context wordt benaderd met het doel gangbare interpretaties van zijn identiteit te problematiseren in plaats van die te versterken, een uitvoeringsstijl ontstaat die inderdaad sterk wordt bepaald door die lichamelijke en psychologische risico's, emotionele uitbarstingen en rapsodische elementen die doorgaans worden geassocieerd met romantisch pianospel. Deze verschuiving in het begrip van de identiteit van Brahms biedt dan ruimte aan een palet van expressieve en technische mogelijkheden die in de huidige uitvoeringspraktijk worden onderdrukt door de mores van de moderne Brahmsstijl: mogelijkheden die, wanneer ze experimenteel worden toegepast, de hiaten tussen de hedendaagse Brahmsstijl en die van de vroege opnames zowel verkleinen als verder verduidelijken. Tegelijkertijd bieden ze in het universum van de huidige uitvoeringspraktijk van de desbetreffende muziek van Brahms een prikkelende verzoening aan tussen de Scylla en Charybdis van enerzijds de sympathie voor historiserende aspecten, en anderzijds de gevolgen van een in creativiteit gewortelde aanpak.

Curriculum Vitae

Anna Scott (b. 1978) was born to Canadian parents in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Having grown up in Nova Scotia, Canada, she completed simultaneous B.Sc. (Pre-Medicine) and B.Mus. (Piano Performance) degrees at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. After undertaking a Performance Diploma at the Glenn Gould School of Music in Toronto, Ontario, she completed her M.Mus. in Piano Performance at McGill University in Montreal, Québèc. While enrolled in the DocArtes PhD Programme in the Musical Arts, Anna has been active as a lecturer, examiner and artistic research supervisor at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague; she has been a Doctoral Artistic Research Fellow at the Orpheus Research Centre in Music (ORCiM) in Ghent; she is on the organisation team of the DocArtes PhD programme at the Orpheus Institute; her work has been published in the *New Sound International Journal of Music*, in *Context: Journal of Music Research*, and in Leuven University Press/Orpheus Institute's *Sound and Score: Essays on Sound, Score and Notation* and *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology*; she has organized two international seminars at the Orpheus Institute; she is co-leading a study into the reflexivity of advanced artistic research and conservatory musical training at the Lemmensinstituut in Leuven, Belgium; and she has given lectures, masterclasses and performances related to her artistic research activities at King's College London, as part of the CMPCP/IMR Seminar Series at Senate House London, at the Royal Academy of Art and Royal Conservatory of Music in The Hague, at Studio Loos in The Hague, and at the Orpheus Institute.

Acknowledgements

As any doctoral student can attest, the journey from PhD proposal to defence can be exhilarating, arduous, frightening and, above all else, isolating. Thankfully, the one constant throughout my doctoral trajectory has been the steadying, inspiring and rigorous influence of my supervisor, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson. When I rather sheepishly appeared at his office door in 2009, having clumsily navigated the maze of winding stairs and mysteriously unmarked doors that form the Music Department of King's College London, I could not have imagined, upon hearing what was at that time nothing more than a vague idea for a PhD project, that he would have supported and nurtured this work with such interest and trust. Indeed, his genuine passion and confidence in this project has kept both it and its lead investigator afloat at times when even I doubted their worth. I still cannot find his office at King's upon first attempt, but when I do manage it, whether for a supervisory meeting or for one of his infamous cake seminars, I always leave feeling like this work is necessary, and that I might be just the one to do it.

Cutting through the doubt and isolation that can be the lot of the PhD student has also been the figure of Bruce Haynes: first as the instigator of this project, having encouraged me to question issues of performance style in a graduate seminar at McGill; then as an active member of my PhD supervisory team, during which time we clandestinely discussed the emperor's lack of clothes and dreamed up shiny new garments over Belgian beer or his partner Susie's delicious cooking; and then after his passing, as a guiding spiritual force urging me ever forward. His last words "I am questioning..." aptly sum up both his own legacy as well as the impetus, methods and findings of this project. Thanks too to my promoter Frans De Ruiter, for his omnipresence at every stage of this journey: from my audition in Ghent so many years ago, to the chaos of submission and defence. As a 'front line' soldier, he has elegantly weathered my perfectionist tendencies, terrors and tears with that mix of firm insistence, patience and handkerchiefs that are so necessary to ensuring that the work marches on, in spite of oneself.

Special thanks also to Peter Dejans, director of the Orpheus Institute in Ghent. He has created a rarefied oasis where an international group of performer-scholars can converge to nurture and share their ideas, conspiracies and revolutions: be it during their doctoral work as DocArtes students, or as advanced artistic researchers as part of the Orpheus Research Centre in Music (ORCiM). It has been an immense privilege and learning experience to be a part of both cohorts, and neither exists without Peter Dejans's guiding vision. My time at the Orpheus Institute has also afforded serendipitous encounters and collaborations with a number of brilliant scholar-performers. I'm thinking in particular here of pianist Darla Crispin, who has unknowingly transformed me into the artistic researcher I am today, and from whom I still have so much to learn; and tenor Valentin Gloor, with whom I continue to plot ever new ways of surprising, enchanting and provoking my own musical assumptions and capacities, as well as those of audiences.

This project was completed with neither a room nor a piano of one's own. I'm forever grateful however to the friends and colleagues who lent me theirs, and in particular to Peter van Bergen for the generous use of his studio. Thanks also to the friends who showed up for lecture-performances, who listened to run-throughs, who compensated for my shameful technological skills, who knew when I needed distraction, and who silently understood when I needed to be left alone to mutter imperceptibly about how much work there was to do. The practice-led PhD is not kind on friendships: if one can justify not researching or writing, there remains countless of hours of practicing to be done, and vice versa. One cannot research however, nor write, nor practice, nor even avoid any of these tasks, without the oft-unrequited kindness (and forgiveness) of friends.

One of the most difficult aspects of this journey has been the 5,000 kilometres between where this work was completed and my family. Though I likely would not have had much time to spend with them had I chosen to pursue my studies closer to home, one really feels the distance between here and there during the longest and darkest days of the PhD. Distance aside however, on a daily basis I still find myself drawing upon my mother's virtuosic modelling of both the power and pitfalls of ferocious determination whilst navigating unfamiliar worlds far from home; my father's predilection for casual music-making, solitude, the sea, and for observing and reflecting before acting or speaking; and my brother's uncanny ability to deliver support and off-colour humour when they are most needed.

My final and deepest thanks however go to Steve, who has been by my side long before this project came about. Such is my gratitude, respect and love and for his musicianship, his kind and calming spirit, his tireless generosity and selflessness, as well as his wit, toughness, patience, loyalty and perseverance, that to say any more here seems trite. I'd be adrift without him, and yet together we have done everything we ever dreamed. On our journey together across the Atlantic Ocean for my PhD audition, I found myself listening to one song over and over. Its closing lyrics seem to capture the past, present and future of both our relationship as well as my artistic research aspirations.

I embrace my desire to
feel the rhythm, to feel connected...
to feel inspired, to fathom the power,
to witness the beauty, to bathe in the fountain,
to swing on the spiral of our divinity and still be human.

With my feet upon the ground
I lose myself between the sounds...
I'm reaching up and reaching out.
I'm reaching for the random or what ever will bewilder me.
And following our will and wind we may just go where no one's been.
We'll ride the spiral to the end and may just go where no one's been.[533]

[533] Danny Carey, Justin Chancellor, Adam Jones, and Maynard James Keenan, "Lateralus," *Tool: Lateralus*, Volcano 9210132 (CD), 2001.